the weekly Standard

MAY 18, 2009

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GOD AND OBAMA AT NOTRE DAME
JOSEPH BOTTUM

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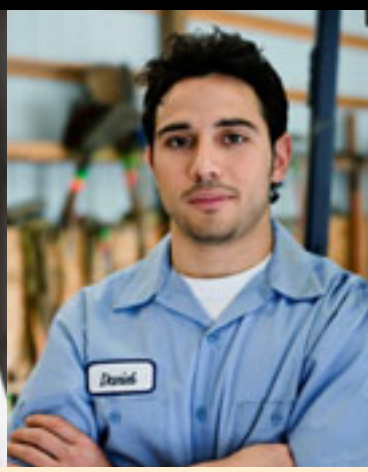

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Contents

May 18, 2009 • Volume 14, Number 33

2 Scrapbook ..... *The Washington Dauphin*

4 Casual ..... *Christopher Caldwell, FedUp*

5 Editorial ..... *Stop ObamaCare*

Articles

7 The Quarterback in the Big Game *Jack F. Kemp, 1935-2009* ..... BY NEWT GINGRICH

9 Be the Party of No *It's the route to Republican landslides* ..... BY FRED BARNES

10 The Fog of War *Forgetting what we once knew* ..... BY JONATHAN V. LAST

11 Let's Not Swap *The last story about barter making a comeback. Ever.* ..... BY JOE QUEENAN

12 The Florida Underdog *Marco Rubio's uphill race against Charlie Crist* ..... BY JOHN MCCORMACK

Cover: Thomas Fluharty

Features

14 'Why Can't a Girl Have a Penis?' ..... BY CHARLOTTE ALLEN
And other major issues in educational research.

20 God and Obama at Notre Dame ..... BY JOSEPH BOTTUM
The clash between Catholic culture and Catholic colleges.

24 Lawcrime ..... BY TOD LINDBERG
The first thing we do, let's prosecute all the lawyers.

Books & Arts

28 Come to Life *The Hebrew revival in modern literature* ..... BY BENJAMIN BALINT

30 Brussels Sprout *Would Tintin appeal to American taste?* ..... BY MICHAEL TAUBE

31 'Elements' at 50 *It's an etiquette book, not a collection of inflexible rules* ..... BY ANDREW FERGUSON

33 A Chimp's Story *The ape between Tarzan and Jane* ..... BY ZACHARY MUNSON

35 Green Hornet *The evolution of a West German radical* ..... BY KAREN DONFRIED

39 Thinking on Film *The way the wind is blowing for newspaper movie critics* ..... BY JOHN PODHORETZ

40 Parody ..... *Gay Awareness Month*

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BPA INTERNATIONAL

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The Washington Dauphin

Anyone who doubts that there is a permanent establishment in political Washington, even something like royalty, has evidently never heard of 26-year-old Quinn Bradlee.

Young Bradlee is the offspring of Benjamin Bradlee, 87, former editor of the *Washington Post*, and Sally Quinn, the onetime *Post* Style section writer, now 68, who is married to Benjamin Bradlee and co-moderates (with *Newsweek* editor Jon Meacham) a blog called On Faith on the *Post* website.

So far as The Scrapbook can tell, the only distinction in Quinn Bradlee's life thus far is the fact that he suffers from Velo-Cardio-Facial Syndrome, a genetic disorder which can cause learning disabilities and required him to attend what he calls a "special school" in upstate New York. All of which is fine and, of course, entirely blameless—except that he has just published an autobiography, entitled *A Different Life: Growing Up Learning Disabled and Other Adventures*, which has been excerpted here and in Britain, and that he has been extensively interviewed, including on PBS by Judy Woodruff ("Some of the toughest parts of the book [are] when you write about not having friends. What has that been like? And how have you dealt with it?").

The Scrapbook doesn't know very much about young Bradlee's disorder, but it does know about Sally Quinn and Ben Bradlee and suspects that the idea for *A Different Life* did not originate with Quinn Bradlee. As it happens, it was actually written by Jeff Himmelman, who helped *Post* reporter/editor Bob Woodward write his book about Alan Greenspan, and who is now finishing his authorized biography of Benjamin Bradlee. *A Different Life* has been published by PublicAffairs, which is run by Peter Osnos, who used to work for Benjamin Bradlee at the *Post*.

As readers might expect, the life of a 26-year-old is not especially remarkable, and the reflections of a 26-year-old on that life are even less remarkable. That is, except for the fact that, as the son of Sally Quinn and Benjamin Bradlee, Quinn Bradlee has been witness to some memorable episodes.

The Scrapbook's favorite features a family vacation on the Caribbean island of St. Martin, where the 19-year-old Quinn loses his virginity in a brothel, and tells his father about it the next morning.

> [A]ll of a sudden, my mother walked out onto the terrace. She asked what was going on and I told her. All hell broke loose. . . . The first thing she did was ask if I was joking. I think she was so stunned she didn't believe me. Then she asked whether I'd used a condom, which of course I had. When she found out I'd lost my virginity at a "house of ill repute," she went nuts. . . . She started to go on and on about how many people on the island had AIDS. She was making me upset, but she was making herself more upset. . . .
>
> My mother started to call every doctor she knew to tell them what had happened. My dad calls this "going to General Quarters"—an expression from the Navy that means getting the ship ready for battle. And, boy, was my mom on the warpath. She's a powerful woman.

The co-moderator of On Faith then marched her son back to the brothel, where she demanded that all the girls report immediately to a clinic to be tested for HIV infection.

"I don't think my mother was intentionally trying to embarrass me," he writes, "but I'd never been embarrassed like that before. I couldn't wait to leave St. Martin." You think?

To be sure, an incident such as this one is not likely to occur in every family—even a family vacationing on an exclusive Caribbean isle—but would most parents encourage their learning-disabled son to write about it, and arrange for publication?

"More than anything," writes Quinn Bradlee, "I want a girlfriend. . . . I seem to have the worst luck with women no matter how hard I try. I feel they're picking up some vibe from me that says I can't handle a relationship, or I'm not mature enough to be in a relationship. Whatever it is, I am apparently doing something wrong."

For which The Scrapbook can report that there is a happy ending. Last week it was announced that Quinn Bradlee is engaged to be married, after a whirlwind four-month courtship, to a young woman named Pary Williamson. Miss Williamson is a Washington, D.C., yoga instructor, and the two were introduced by one of her students, *New York Times* columnist Maureen Dowd. Among Miss Williamson's clientele may be found David Gregory, host of NBC's *Meet the Press*, *Washington Post* publisher Katharine Weymouth, and White House Chief of Staff Rahm Emanuel. ♦

Journalism 101

It's a shame the Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting has already been handed out. Had it not been, surely the critical coverage of the Obamas' walking hand-in-hand on the South Lawn would have merited consideration. Wrote the Associated Press: "After their motorcade arrived back at the White House, the first couple wanted a private stroll. Below an overcast sky Saturday, the Obamas clasped hands and made their way down the driveway of the White House South

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Lawn. They came back the same way, rounding out their 8-minute walk. . . . "

And then there was Philip Rucker in the *Washington Post*, carefully monitoring President Obama and Vice President Biden's lunch last week among the commoners at a local Virginia burger joint. Rucker devoted 617 words to this momentous occasion, with such crucial details as:

> The world's most powerful man, and the guy a heartbeat away, waited patiently in a single-file line as the lunch crowd gawked—and as two customers in front of them at the counter pondered the menu leisurely, apparently oblivious to whom they were holding up. Then it came time to order.
>
> Obama tilted his head to read the menu, but took a pass on Ray's specialty burgers, like the 'Let's Get It On,' or the $17.50 burger with foie gras and white truffle oil. Obama, customer No. 42, opted for something more simple: "Your basic cheddar cheeseburger, medium well."
>
> No ketchup, the president said, but lettuce and tomato. And: "Have you got a spicy mustard or somethin' like that? A Dijon mustard?"

Hard as it is to believe, the president of the United States ordered for himself. And then, even more shockingly, he opened his mouth and bit into the hamburger, chewed it several times, then swallowed. Amazingly, he repeated this process throughout the meal, which, as Rucker carefully notes, lasted 34 minutes. He also left a $5 tip.

Inexplicably, Rucker leaves out what the leader of the free world drank. We know Vice President Biden had a root beer. But what about the president? Or did he not drink? (We know he doesn't sweat.)

The two men split the bill, though the president did pay for the meals of the attending press corps. This may have something to do with the fawning coverage, though we are pretty sure the mainstream media would have been happy just to gaze at him eating. ♦

Sentences We Didn't Finish

'It's almost impossible to think of Boston without the *Globe*. With its great universities and cultural institutions, the city thinks of itself as a modern-day Athens, the hub of the Universe. How could Boston exist without the erudite, patrician *Globe*, which so often . . . " (Eugene Robinson, *Washington Post*, May 5). ♦

Jack F. Kemp, 1935-2009

Besides the article by Newt Gingrich elsewhere in this issue, a number of obituaries of former congressman, cabinet member, and vice presidential candidate Jack Kemp appeared on our website this week—by former Kemp colleagues Mary Brunette Cannon, David Smick, and John C. Weicher, and by Clark Durant and Fred Barnes. You can read them all (and much else!) at www.weeklystandard.com. ♦

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Casual

FedUp

Researching an article on Ireland that ran in the STANDARD last week, I came across a pessimistic series of employment projections by PwC. They sounded important. But I had a problem before I could cite them. Who or what was PwC? Was it the acronym of some trustworthy national statistics office? Of some upstanding but possibly biased lobby with a name like Progressive Workforce Coalition? Or was it the chat-room alias of a drunken blogger called, say, Paddy "Wildman" Connolly?

The "w" at least seemed to rule out the possibility that the word was in the Irish language. Anyone who has spent time in Ireland will have noticed the bilingualism that is a legacy of the young Irish republic's (failed) attempt to revive Irish over the past century. You'll see a door that says "Toilet," and below it "*Mhbhnhsnaiodh-bhrachtáis go mbleimh-seo*," which is Irish for either "Toilet" or (more likely) "Let the Tourists Use This One—The Clean Bathroom Is Across the Hall."

A bit of Internet searching revealed that PwC was PricewaterhouseCoopers, the consulting firm that grew out of the accounting firm Price Waterhouse when it merged with Coopers & Lybrand. Oh, them! Why didn't they say so? So I wrote the name out as Price Waterhouse Coopers. And with that, I realized, I had walked into a moral conundrum. Was this fair? Was it "inaccurate"? After all, it's their name—what right did I have to call them something else?

Well, I decided, the same right as the corporate artiste who came up with the idea of changing the surname of poor Mr. Waterhouse (whoever he was) into lower case so it could be jammed into that of the late Mr. Price, then shunting the new amalgamated name like a boxcar into that of Coopers without any intervening space and then, finally, detaching Lybrand from the train altogether. It is a kind of semiotic petty theft. The corporation acquires the feeling of "Oh, aren't I special!" and the cost in intelligibility gets paid by the public.

Now, PwC is not the only company that does this boxcar trick. There are HarperCollins and FedEx, too, and that is leaving aside eBay and iPods. And the prejudice among pedants that spaces, hyphens, and other marks of separation were to be done away with dates at least to the 1980s, when I made my living as a copy-editor. The presumption of the *Chicago Manual of Style*, the bible of typesetters, is that any time you attach a prefix to a word, you create a new freestanding word. The result is typesetting that looks wrong more often than right. I recently read a book about Reagan in which a line broke with "presum-" and was picked up on the next line not by "-ably" but with "-mit." Breaks like "unkosh-" . . . "er" ought to be un-kosher.

HAL MAYFORTH

On television, you are shown not "mini-series" but "miniseries," which looks like it should be accented on the second syllable. It comes off either as a typographical error ("You mean ministries?") or a Latinate word you would expect to see used by one of those minor Victorian poets more alluded to than read (" . . . what Arthur Hugh Clough called 'the scourges and miniseries of war' . . . "). Thus "bio-pic," which is barely intelligible, gets written as "biopic," which is not intelligible at all. ("The tumor was discovered early, thanks to advances in biopics.")

But typographic innovation is mostly about vanity—misplaced vanity. Consider E.E. Cummings, or e.e. cummings, as he sometimes chose to style himself. He is a poet of considerable merit, an impressive minor novelist, and one of the genuine men of letters of the early 20th century. When I started reading him in the 1970s, the all-small-letters seemed countercultural. Now they seem like the mark of someone who was looking to be noticed for something other than the quality of his poetry, and he is read accordingly. If the feminist intellectual Gloria Jean Watkins had not changed her name to bell hooks I might have read her by now.

Language is a public good. You don't have a right to treat it any way you like, to free-ride on common understandings. Someone who shouts "Fire!" in a crowded theater cannot exculpate himself by insisting that in his family "Fire!" means popcorn. You can innovate with language but you cannot privatize it. That is why most of us feel faintly affronted to hear the name of a favorite stadium preceded by the name of a corporate sponsor. Cutesy spellings that cut against decades of habit are generally attempts to bully the public. They should be met with all the resistance at our disposal. I have that on the authority of Paddy "Wildman" Connolly.

CHRISTOPHER CALDWELL

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the weekly Standard

Stop ObamaCare

President Obama and the Democratic leaders of Congress have made it clear that health care reform is their top legislative priority this year. The administration laid down some general markers in its budget, and the president has enunciated principles in several speeches. Key committees in both houses of Congress are now beginning the work of drafting a bill.

The program's basic shape seems likely to follow the outlines of Obama's campaign proposal. Employers would be required to provide health coverage or pay a fine, proceeds from which would support the creation of a new government-run insurance option. There would be a national insurance exchange through which those without access to employer-provided coverage could enroll in the public plan or one of a range of private plans that agree to certain conditions (including covering all comers, regardless of health status). And those below a certain income threshold (likely around 300 percent of the poverty line) would receive subsidies to purchase such coverage.

This is clearly intended to be transitory, rather than a final program. It would create incentives for employers to drop their health coverage plan (by making it cheaper to pay the fine than offer coverage) and would enable the new public insurance plan to undersell private insurers by imposing price controls similar to those employed in Medicare. A large number of workers finding themselves without their old employer-based coverage would "opt" for the public plan, creating, in effect, a massive new public health insurance program. Call it single payer by degrees.

The approach has been carefully designed to avoid the failings of the last major Democratic attempt at health care reform, the Clinton administration's effort in 1993 and 1994. By providing only an outline and leaving the detailed work to Congress, the administration avoids having the complexity of the plan hung around its neck before legislators even take it up. By creating the impression of choice and competition, they avoid some of the opposition of private insurers—who will play along if they think they will have a chance at participating in the new marketplace. And, by providing something of an out for employers with the fine, Democrats hope also to avoid the opposition of business groups.

But the Obama plan, whatever its tactical cleverness, will suffer from the key drawbacks of all government-financed and managed health insurance. It would make the government the gatekeeper—the controller of prices and the provider of coverage. Health care decisions would increasingly be made in Washington and subject to political pressures that take into account neither patient needs nor economic realities. The cost of the program would be such that the effort to pay for it would become the central concern of American politics—rendering essentially untenable any effort to roll back government spending or reform federal tax law. As we see around the world, health care is the key to public enmeshment in ballooning welfare states, and passage of ObamaCare would deal a heavy blow to the conservative enterprise in American politics.

The combination of a plan that obscures the flaws that killed HillaryCare and the daunting Democratic majority in both houses of Congress has left many Republicans fatalistic. GOP leaders in Congress seem to be looking for ways to compromise at the edges or to live with what emerges. They take the successful enactment of some version of ObamaCare almost for granted. And yet Obama's plan is enormously vulnerable. Its sheer size and ambition argue against any notion that it will easily pass, and certain features suggest specific weaknesses that ought to draw the attention of conservative opponents.

First, the public insurance option, which is a central feature of the plan, seriously threatens the fragile alliance between Democrats and health insurance providers. Insurers worry that the public option is designed to price them out of business. If it is not subject to the same state and federal regulatory limits that constrain their practices and if it can strong-arm providers with artificial price controls—which would only shift costs to private insurers and patients as they now do in Medicare—the playing field will be uneven. The public plan has so far been the most prominent vulnerability of the Democrats' proposal, with Senate moderates like Olympia Snowe, Ben Nelson, and Arlen Specter expressing concerns about it. But it is crucial to the logic of the Democrats' approach and will be difficult for Obama and congressional leaders to give up.

Second, the Obama plan would involve a profound displacement of currently insured Americans, who for the most part are happy with their coverage and will not appreciate being dumped into a program that could end up resembling Medicaid. A recent study by the Lewin Group estimates that almost 120 million Americans could be forced from employer-based coverage into government-run insurance by the kind of two-step strategy the Democrats envision. Americans with stable job-based insurance do not know

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this is what Democrats have in store for them, and they will not be happy about it. Last year the Kaiser Family Foundation found that well over 80 percent of insured Americans rated their health insurance as excellent or good. The standing inertia of the happily insured has been the greatest obstacle to any reform of American health care—be it liberal or conservative. It was crucial to stopping the Clinton plan 16 years ago, when the level of satisfaction with existing arrangements was significantly lower than today.

And then there's the plan's immense price tag. The basic aim of the Obama plan is to add another health care entitlement to the unaffordable ones we already have in Medicare and Medicaid. Most analysts expect the subsidies for expanded coverage to cost at least $150 billion per year. Even if phased in over several years, the ten-year price tag will easily exceed $1 trillion. No Democrat has yet come forward with a credible plan to pay for such an expensive program. Paying for their health care plan, or even credibly pretending to pay for it, will require new taxes and spending cuts on a scale that most Democrats so far seem afraid to discuss in public.

The greatest vulnerability of ObamaCare is that it will inevitably lead to rationing of health care.

Beyond the direct costs of a new federal entitlement are general questions about rising health care costs. If the government intends to take these costs upon itself, it will have to show how they will cease to balloon in the future or else how they can be paid for. So far, the president and congressional Democrats have relied on vague promises to "bend the cost curve" and on minor tinkering like increased investment in health information technology, additional research into cost-effective products and practices, and more preventive care. Some of this agenda might actually be meritorious, but it is certainly modest. The contention that it would reverse a half-century of costs rising faster than income is ludicrous.

The cost estimates paint a very grim picture of the future of health care and federal budgets under the Democrats' plans, and the greatest vulnerability of ObamaCare is that it will inevitably lead to rationing of health care. This is something the public, rightly, fears above all else. There are really only two ways to keep costs under control: by building a real marketplace in which cost-conscious consumers make choices or by imposing arbitrary limits, determined by the government, on care. As the Democrats have rejected the first option they will quickly have no choice but to adopt the second.

The Obama team hopes that by enacting the expansions of coverage but not the needed cost-controls this year, they can create unalterable facts on the ground without having a real debate about rationing. Then in a year or two, they will come back, as all government health insurance programs do, and insist on stricter controls in the name of protecting the Treasury. It is clear they are already contemplating this next step, with growing talk of federal "effectiveness research" and Obama's recent musings in the *New York Times Magazine* about whether his own grandmother should have been allowed to have a hip replacement in her final months. Above all else, Republicans must make it clear to the electorate that if Obama prevails with his plan, the government will end up controlling when and where they can obtain care.

One key to highlighting these weaknesses is not simply to talk about them, but to offer a credible alternative that assures those with insurance they will not be forced out and offers an appealing way to control costs—to both consumers and to the government.

The core of such a reform would involve replacing the tax exemption for employer-based health coverage with a new federal tax credit for everyone. This would convert millions of passive insurance enrollees into cost-conscious consumers shopping in an insurance marketplace. But unlike past iterations of this approach, conservatives should propose to pursue it in stages, beginning with small businesses and the uninsured—groups with poor existing options and thus not averse to change.

Such a reform would allow small-business employees to select their insurance in organized, state-facilitated marketplaces in the same way that federal workers can choose their coverage today. Workers would be making the insurance selection, not firms, from a menu of competing offerings. Workers in medium and larger firms would maintain the same coverage they have today—although the switch to tax credits would add a new level of cost-consciousness to the design of existing employer plans—and as the individual insurance marketplace developed around workers in smaller firms, it would help reduce public anxiety about a gradual transition away from employer-based health care.

Such a Republican initiative would demonstrate that we can build on what is best (and well liked) about the current system—high quality care, doctor and patient control—while adding options onto the existing employer-based structure that encourage gradual and sensible moves toward a genuine individual insurance market.

Conservatives can make it clear they support reform. But they must make it even clearer that the Democrats' plan would displace tens of millions of happily insured Americans and exacerbate the worst elements of the current system: gross inefficiency, high costs, and bureaucracy. President Obama and his congressional allies are pursuing a mammoth, complex, hugely expensive, ill-designed reform that is not likely to be popular when understood. Conservatives have a very real chance at stopping it if they highlight its key weaknesses and supply a superior alternative.

—James C. Capretta & Yuval Levin

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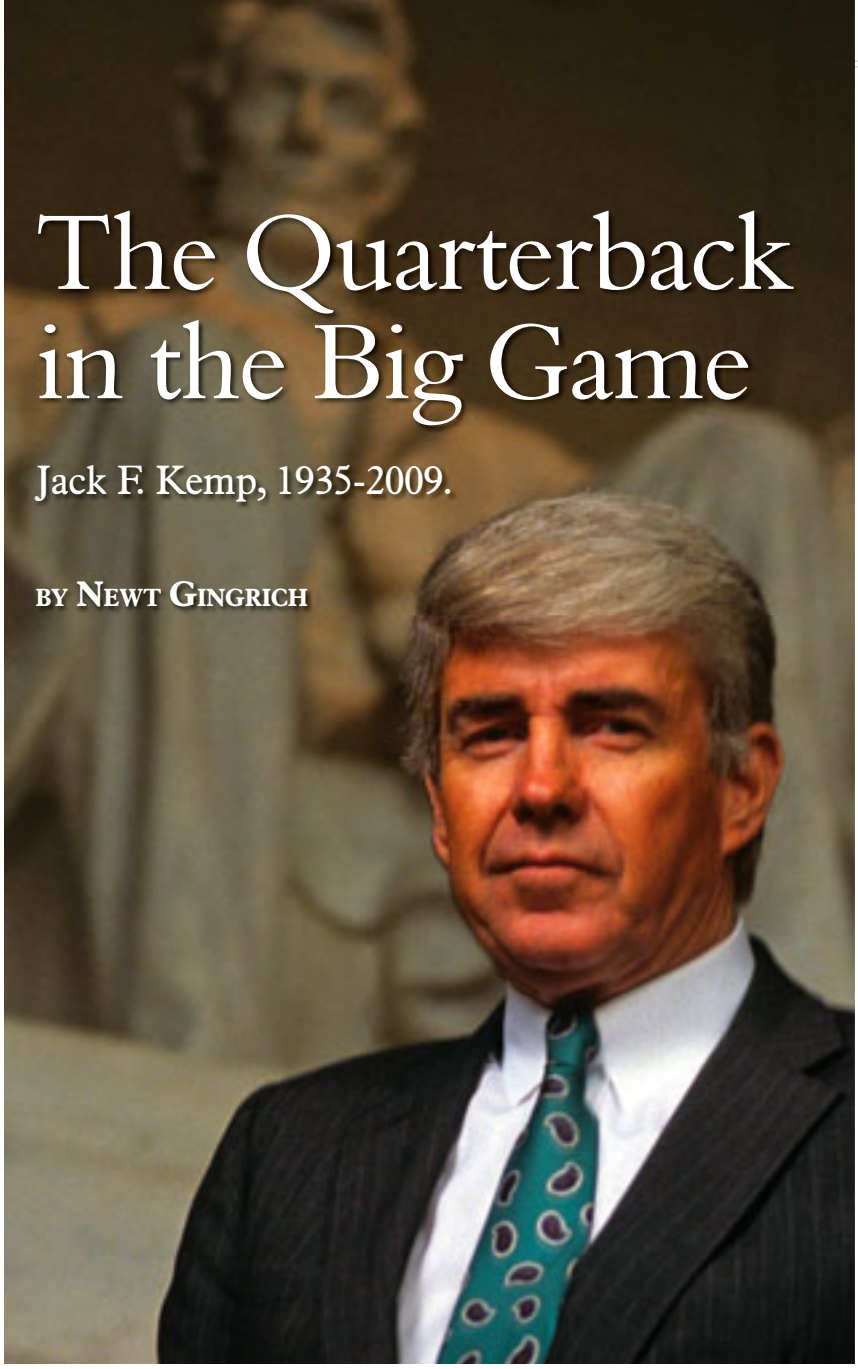
The Quarterback in the Big Game

Jack F. Kemp, 1935-2009.

BY NEWT GINGRICH



GETTY IMAGES

Jack Kemp lived every day as "the big game"—a fresh chance to score touchdowns and win the contest. He always heard the potential roar of the crowds, and he was energized by the possibility of achievement. More than any Republican since Theodore Roosevelt he believed in the strenuous life and reveled in meeting challenges and overcoming difficulties.

Jack Kemp must have learned these deep traits of resilience, determination, and courage at an early age. He displayed them in his professional football career, where being cut and traded had no discernible effect on his self-confidence and his enthusiasm. He knew he could be an effective leader on the field, and eventually the Buffalo Bills gave him the chance to prove it.

When Kemp left the contests of the football arena, it was to take on the even more tumultuous conflicts of the political arena. He identified deeply with the blue-collar industrial workers who had been his fans in Buffalo, and would represent them in Congress from 1971 to 1989.

Unlike most Republicans, Kemp took very seriously the economic insecurity of the working class and the plight of their aging, decaying industrial base. Unlike most Democrats, Kemp knew that high taxes, big government, and welfare were not a solution—they were a trap that would destroy people and communities.

Once he got to Congress he discovered daring, change-oriented economists like Arthur Laffer, who understood that high tax rates (which then topped out at 70 percent) stifled growth and investment. He also met the leading writer about investment-led growth (which is what "supply side economics" is all about) Jude Wanniski. They and others rapidly educated Kemp on the case for lower taxation as the key to productivity and economic growth. Convinced by the "supply side" model of lower taxes and greater entrepreneurship, Kemp became the leading evangelist—and legislator—of the new movement.

It is hard today to remember how initially isolated, opposed, and ridiculed Kemp was by the Republican establishment. Before Kemp, the party had been deeply committed to austerity, spending cuts, and economic pain. Republicans had opposed John F. Kennedy's tax cuts. The last Republican House majority (1953-54) had raised taxes. It had also failed to be reelected. The House Republicans were a boring, inwardly oriented group with the mindset of a permanent minority.

Into this stodgy world came the hurricane-like energy and noise of a professional football quarterback appealing to blue-collar Democrats. It was astonishing to watch Kemp brush aside his critics. He cheerfully, enthusiastically, and joyfully undertook missionary efforts on behalf of lower taxes, entrepreneurs, and economic growth.

I first met Jack Kemp in 1976 when I was waging my second campaign for Congress. I had lost in 1974, and with fellow Georgian Jimmy Carter as the Democratic presidential nominee I was on the way to a second defeat. Kemp came to the GOP state conven-

Former House speaker Newt Gingrich is the author, along with Jackie Gingrich Cushman, of the forthcoming book, 5 Principles for a Successful Life: From Our Family to Yours.

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tion in Savannah and was a wonderful breath of new ideas, new hope, and new optimism. I got to spend an hour with him in which he coached me on campaigning (a little) and on the new economics of growth and opportunity (a lot). I left Savannah far more enthusiastic than I arrived.

In 1978 I ran my third campaign as a "supply side, tax cut, economic growth" Republican. That was the year the Republican National Committee chairman Bill Brock chartered a plane dubbed the tax-cut special and flew Kemp and Senator Bill Roth around the country touting their bold new agenda—a 10 percent tax cut per year for three years. It became a centerpiece of our 1978 effort. Our campaign put out a newspaper dedicated to how lower taxes would improve the lives of working Georgians. We used a grocery shopping cart as our symbol. We had combined Jack's supply-side ideas with the modern equivalent of William McKinley's full lunch bucket to appeal to working Americans and their economic interests. We won.

I came to Washington as a Kemp disciple, but I got madder at the old Republican establishment than he did. I resented their slights and maneuvers, while he cheerfully tromped past them and kept talking up new ideas, outreach, and policies.

Halfway through my freshman term, in 1979, Kemp said he was going to California. He was wavering between running for president himself as a tax-cutting candidate and helping lead Ronald Reagan's campaign. Kemp had been an intern in Governor Reagan's office a decade before. He liked Reagan but was determined that there would be a candidate dedicated to the Kemp-Roth tax cuts.

The following Monday I got a very excited phone call from a very happy Jack Kemp. Governor Reagan had agreed to make tax cuts a centerpiece of his campaign, and Kemp had agreed to be one of his national chairmen.

I have always wondered what would have happened if Reagan had picked Kemp to be his vice presidential nominee in 1980. Kemp was from upstate New York and would have brought regional balance. He represented an appeal to blue-collar conservative Democrats rather than an effort to reach out to moderate, more affluent voters.

Kemp was a true believer in tax cuts, in a strong national defense, and in a Republican party that actively sought to improve the lives of every American. He liked to point out that as a football player, he had been in locker rooms with more minority Americans than many Republicans had met in their lifetimes. Kemp had a natural desire to be a good shepherd and seek a wider flock. He would have been a great vice president in 1980 and a growth and inclusion-oriented president in 1988.

As it is, Kemp changed history more than many presidents. Working with Reagan, he ushered in a tax-cut revolution and an understanding of entre-

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preneurial economics that changed policies in dozens of countries.

After Barack Obama's high tax, big-government, politician-centered model of trickle-down bureaucracy fails, and its $9 trillion debt brings on inflation and economic disarray, it will be time to dust off Jack Kemp's speeches and educate Americans once more in the virtues of growth and opportunity that he devoted his life to. ♦

Be the Party of No

It's the route to Republican landslides.

BY FRED BARNES

Republican leaders in Congress have created something called the National Council for a New America (NCNA). It describes itself as "not a Republican-only forum" but one that seeks to "engage people in a discussion to meet common challenges and build a stronger country through common-sense ideas." The expectation—mine, anyway—is those ideas will differ from President Obama's in a way that makes Republicans look fair-minded and reasonable. The council's first event at a pizza parlor in Arlington, Virginia, did just that. Mitt Romney and Jeb Bush showed up, media coverage was heavy, and the session was deemed a success.

Improving the party's image is a worthy cause, but it isn't what Republicans ought to be emphasizing right now. They have a more important mission: to be the party of no. And not just a party that bucks Obama and Democrats on easy issues like releasing Gitmo terrorists in this country, but one committed to aggressive, attention-grabbing opposition to the entire Obama agenda.

Many Republicans recoil from being combative adversaries of a popular president. They shouldn't. Opposing Obama across-the-board on his sweeping domestic initiatives makes sense on substance and politics. His policies—on spending, taxes, health care, energy, intervention in the economy, etc.—would change the country in ways most Americans don't believe in. That's the substance. And a year or 18 months from now, after those policies have been picked apart and exposed and possibly defeated, the political momentum is likely to have shifted away from Obama and Democrats.

This scenario has occurred time and again. Why do you think Democrats won the House and Senate in 2006 and bolstered their majorities in 2008? It wasn't because they were more thoughtful, offered compelling alternatives, or had improved their brand. They won because they opposed unpopular policies of President Bush and exploited Republican scandals in Congress. They were highly partisan and not very nice about it.

If Republicans scan their history, they'll discover unbridled opposition to bad Democratic policies pays off. Those two factors, unattractive policies plus strong opposition, were responsible for the Republican landslides in 1938, 1946, 1966, 1980, and 1994. A similar blowout may be beyond the reach of Republicans in 2010, but stranger things have happened in electoral politics. They'll lose nothing by trying.

Let's look at the five landslides. Republicans were crushed in three straight elections before rebounding in 1938. How come? FDR uncorked his court-packing plan, launched a jihad against disloyal Democrats, and was fairly blamed for a new economic downturn (known as "the depression within the depression"). Republicans piled on and won seven Senate and 81 House seats.

In 1946, the public was fed up with wartime regulations that many Democrats were seeking to retain. Republicans asked, "Had enough?" Voters had.

In 1966, voters reacted adversely to the vast Great Society programs enacted after the Democratic triumph in 1964. Republicans, written off as dead, gained 47 House and four Senate seats, eight governorships, and won the presidency two years later.

Ronald Reagan would, in all likelihood, have defeated President Carter in 1980 on his own merit. But public revulsion at Carter's weak foreign policy and disastrous economic record (double-digit inflation and interest rates) produced a landslide that delivered Republicans the Senate as well. Tough Republican critiques of Carterism had played an indispensable role.

Republicans still pride themselves on the Contract with America—dealing with process issues like a balanced budget amendment and term limits—adopted in the 1994 campaign. It may have helped. But the main reason for the Republican capture of the House and Senate was the agenda of President Clinton: health care, crime, guns, taxes, and a lot more. Republicans dissected Clinton's policies skillfully and relentlessly, particularly turning his health care plan, initially quite popular, into an albatross.

Obama may not be as vulnerable as Clinton was, but his policies are. There's no reason for Republicans to hold back. It's evident now that Obama and the congressional Democrats have no interest in compromise. Their intent is to push far-reaching liberal policies through Congress quickly and with minimal debate. Obama's health care scheme would bring the country one step from a single-payer system. His plan to limit carbon emissions would give the federal government unprecedented power over the economy while emasculating the investors, entrepreneurs, and practically everyone else in the business community.

The Republicans have fertile ground to plow. The public is already dubious of a government-run health

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insurance plan, the core of ObamaCare. And there's plenty more for Republicans to focus on, including the threat of a government panel that decides which medical practices are covered and which are ostracized. Defeating ObamaCare, given Democratic majorities on Capitol Hill, may be difficult but it's not an impossibility. If Republicans lead the charge, health care providers and consumers are likely to join the active opposition. Otherwise, they'll remain passive.

Obama says his policy to restrict greenhouse gases, known as cap and trade, is "market-based." It isn't. The cap on emissions would be imposed by a government panel. Polls show the majority of Americans disapprove of this. Worse for Obama, Frank Newport, the Gallup boss, says most Americans don't believe global warming poses a serious danger. So why choke off economic growth?

Then there are the unforced errors of the Obama administration to take advantage of. The president's decision to close Gitmo has backfired badly, leaving him with terrorists on his hands and nowhere to put them. The takeover of GM and Chrysler has raised concerns, even in Europe, over the competence and judgment of the Obama team. The American public is lopsidedly against further bailouts of the Big 2.

Republican efforts to escape being tagged the party of no are understandable. The label gives Democrats and the media echo chamber a talking point. Should the NCNA come up with new ideas that spruce up the party's image, that's helpful. The criticism of the council by social conservatives, by the way, is downright counterproductive. Their attacks merely delight Democrats and the press.

But no matter how restrained and sensible Republicans sound or how many useful ideas they develop, they're probably stuck with the party of no label. They have more to gain by actually accepting the role and taking on Obama vigorously. If they come to be dubbed the party of no, no, no, a thousand times no, all the better. It will mean they're succeeding. ♦

The Fog of War

Forgetting what we once knew.

BY JONATHAN V. LAST

On February 17, the Navy took delivery of its first refurbished W76 warhead. The W76 is a nuclear payload that sits atop the Trident II missiles carried by America's *Ohio*-class submarines. As such, it represents an important part of the country's nuclear arsenal. The refurbishment of the aging W76s has taken much longer than was originally anticipated because once the engineers cracked open the old warheads they encountered a substance codenamed "Fogbank." And they had no idea how to replicate it.

The mystery of Fogbank begins in the late 1970s, in a building called Facility 9404-11 on the grounds of the Y-12 complex in Oak Ridge, Tennessee. The Oak Ridge site sprang from the original Manhattan Project and became one of the seven facilities making up America's nuclear weapons complex (an ominous-sounding phrase coined by the government, and gleefully seized on by the antinuclear left).

Most everything about Fogbank is classified, but we know from unclassified official sources that Fogbank was manufactured in Facility 9404-11 from 1975 until 1989, when the final batch of W76s were completed. After that, the building went dormant. By 1993 it was slated for decommissioning, leaving behind only a pilot plant which had been used to produce small batches of Fogbank for test purposes.

But warheads, like other materiel, have operational lifespans. In 1996, the government realized that large parts of its nuclear arsenal would need to be replaced, refurbished, or pulled from service. In response, the Department of Energy initiated a refurbishing program with the goal of extending the lives of old weapons. In 2000, the National Nuclear Security Administration (NNSA), the branch of the DoE responsible for nuclear weapons, settled on a life-extension plan for the W76s that would keep them in service until at least 2040.

Straight away, the NNSA realized that Fogbank could be a problem because, as the GAO would later report, they had "kept few records of the process when the material was made in the 1980s and almost all the staff with expertise on production had retired or left the agency." The NNSA briefly considered creating a substitute for Fogbank, but ultimately decided that since they had made it before, they would be able to make it again.

But Fogbank proved to be quite tricky. With Facility 9404-11 gone, a new production house was required. There were delays with the construction, and frustrated engineers kept failing to produce a usable version of the mysterious substance. As deadlines passed and the schedule was pushed back again and again, the NNSA eventually decided that, come to think of it, they would invest $23 million in an attempt to find a Fogbank alternative.

As it happens, in March 2007, the engineers found some success and came up with a tentative process for making Fogbank. But when the final tests were run, the material had problems. In September 2007, the NNSA upped the Fogbank project to "Code Blue" status, making it a major priority of the agency. That effort failed, too.

A year later—and with an additional $69 million spent—the NNSA finally rediscovered a workable way to manufacture Fogbank. And seven months after that, the first refurbed warhead was finally handed over to the Navy, nearly a decade after the government

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began the life-extension program. The NNSA charmingly refers to the ordeal as an example of "lost knowledge."

So what is Fogbank, anyway? As Dennis Ruddy, the former general manager at Oak Ridge, once told reporters, "The material is classified. Its composition is classified. Its use in the weapon is classified, and the process itself is classified." That said, the conventional wisdom among arms experts is that Fogbank is an aerogel—a highly rigid yet incredibly low-density material. Aerogels look like fog or smoke, but are solid, like a piece of Styrofoam. Because Fogbank was manufactured at Oak Ridge, it most likely functions as an "interstage" in the warhead: a substance that surrounds the fission and fusion portions of the weapon and channels energy from one to the other. After the fission-stage detonation, the aerogel becomes a superheated plasma, which triggers the larger, fusion-stage detonation.

But all of that hardly matters because Fogbank is just a MacGuffin, a useful reminder that technology is not eternal.

Knowledge can be lost. Sometimes this is perfectly reasonable: No one knows how to kill and skin a mastodon anymore, for obvious reasons. And cultures frequently lose knowledge as they evolve past it—you'd be hard pressed to find anyone who could write a computer program on punch-cards today. But there is something worrisome about misplacing knowledge that is only a generation or two old. And this happens more often than you might think.

"You know the old saying about 'If we can put a man on the moon, why can't we cure cancer, have world peace, whatever?'" muses Rand Simberg, a former Rockwell manager and now an aerospace consultant. "Space enthusiasts say, 'If we can put a man on the moon, why can't we put a man on the moon?'"

The answer, Simberg explains, is that we can't "because most of the people who did it are in their dotage or dead, and a lot of it was more art than science." Today NASA has been reduced—seriously—to buying old parts for the space shuttle from eBay because the contractors who built them don't exist any more. It is an open question whether the American government, five years after President Bush called for a return to the moon, could even build a Saturn V—the rocket used in all the moon shots of the late '60s and early '70s.

As the GAO report on Fogbank admonishes, "assumptions such as 'we did it before so we can do it again' are often wrong." For a society that believes itself to be in a postindustrial information age, that's a sobering thought. ♦

Let's Not Swap

The last story about barter making a comeback. Ever.

BY JOE QUEENAN

Looking for a surefire sign that the economy is poised for a recovery? Here it is. A few weeks ago, the Associated Press ran the story "Bartering makes a comeback for those short on cash." It reported that cash-strapped consumers were increasingly bartering goods for services, rather than exchanging cash. Proof was the fact that bartering ads on Craigslist had doubled since 2008.

The story furnished pithy anecdotes about beauticians trading haircuts and pedicures for day care, and about residents of the Great North Woods exchanging unwanted motorcycles for equally extraneous wood-burning stoves. "If somebody wants something that you've got, there's probably a good chance they've got something you want that they don't want" is how one barterer explained it. At least in Vermont.

For as long as I can remember bartering has been making a comeback, and for as long as I can remember the comeback has never occurred. There is an obvious reason for this: We are not living on the steppes of Mongolia in the 12th century, and we are not Pilgrims. My first job in journalism was as editor of a direct-mail magazine called *American Business*. The magazine was published by the legendary Ralph Ginzburg, who got railroaded and sent to prison by Bobby Kennedy on the specious charge of pandering. (He published inflammatory photographs of a black man and a white woman abed in his ritzy magazine *Eros*, and Kennedy thought this might derail the civil rights movement.) After his release from the big house, Ginzburg began to build a tawdry empire of cheapo magazines sold for as little as $1 for a lifetime subscription to shut-ins and drunks. The magazines existed for one reason only: to compile gigantic mailing lists of names that could be sold to other, more legitimate publications on the prowl for fresh victims. These entities were known as "sucker lists."

Initially, Ginzburg compiled his content by subscribing to the United Press International wire service, editing down some of the many light-hearted human-interest features, and repackaging them as magazine stories. After I had been working for him a while, reshaping this lackluster material, I noticed that many of the stories were nothing more than rewritten press releases. So I told Ginzburg that if he doubled my salary, he could dump the UPI (saving $100,000 a year), and I would write all the stories for him. I spent the next five years cranking out literally hundreds of stories for *American Business*, *Moneysworth*, *Better Living*, and a short-lived magazine called *Uncle Sam*.

When I started working for Ginzburg, I didn't know anything about business. Neither do most people who

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work for the Associated Press. One of the first stories I wrote was about how bartering was making a gigantic comeback. Humongous. Unreal. This was in 1982, when America was just emerging from a brutal recession and interest rates stood at 18 percent and the stock market was meandering around the 700 level and the specter of Jimmy Carter still darkened the horizon. A newcomer to journalism, I was easily seduced by quirky stories like barter-making-a-comeback, ideas which had been pitched to me by some fifth-rate public relations firm that had a doomed barterer as a client. My story was exactly like the one that ran in the Associated Press last week: In tough times, people need to be creative, so they make an end-run around the cash-on-the-barrel-head tradition. That's why barter was making a big comeback.

Barter was not, in fact, making a big comeback, nor has it made a big comeback in the 27 years since 1982. I have never met anyone that has ever bartered anything, whether goods or services, and neither has anyone else I know. This is because bartering is stupid. For example, if I have opera tickets that I don't want, I would never dream of trying to barter them for lawn care or vodka or babysitting services or a root canal; I would either give them away or sell them. You can't ask your surgeon to give you a quadruple heart bypass in exchange for season's tickets to the Jets; he would think you were an idiot. Bartering is a quasi-medieval concept that goes against the grain of the American character. It's an economic activity designed for people who live in yurts.

One thing I have noticed, however, is that barter stories are a useful economic bellwether. Shortly after my first barter story appeared, the market set off a tear that would keep going—in one form or another—until October 2007. Barter stories did make the rounds during the 1990-91 downturn, and again in 2001-02, but those recessions were over so fast that bartering never really got a chance to gather a head of steam. The current recession, which many observers believe could last for awhile, would seem to provide fertile ground for bartering to reenergize itself, but frankly I don't think that's going to happen. Bartering is a cumbersome way to do business and because the IRS views such quid-pro-quo transactions as commercial exchanges, they are taxable. Basically, the whole idea of barter is stupid.

Why do journalists keep writing stories about bartering? Mostly because they are heartwarming and folksy and cute, and are usually the work of journalists who are just starting out in the business and don't yet realize that barter stories are as old as the *Mayflower*.

Each new generation of journalists discovers the bartering story, just as each new generation of journalists discovers the vinyl-LP-making-a-comeback story or the suburbs-are-dying story or the deep-down-inside, Americans-don't-really-like-big cars story. None of these stories is true; none of these stories could possibly be true; but no one ever goes out to check their accuracy or plausibility because when Armageddon seems to be dawning, fact-checking standards become notoriously lax.

The barter-is-making-a-comeback story thus joins the gee-aren't-people-nicer-to-one-another-now-that-their-401(k)s-have-been-decimated story and that lovable old chestnut: Now that tragedy has hit us, the age of irony is over. People are not getting nicer in this country as the financial doldrums worsen, irony is not on the wane, people are not deserting the suburbs in droves, and barter is not making a comeback. But when stories about sudden shifts in our values appear in profusion, get ready for the next bull market. The first time I wrote a barter story, the stock market went off on a 25-year tear that lifted it from below 1,000 to 14,000.

Here's my second. ♦

The Florida Underdog

Marco Rubio's uphill race against Charlie Crist.

BY JOHN MCCORMACK

Last Tuesday, Republican Marco Rubio, former speaker of the Florida House of Representatives, announced a bid for the U.S. Senate seat being vacated by Mel Martinez. At 37, Rubio, a fresh-faced charismatic Cuban American and Jeb Bush protégé, would seem to be the perfect recruit for statewide office. But a big obstacle stands between him and the GOP nomination: Charlie Crist, the state's popular, moderate, one-term governor, who is expected to announce his own run for the Senate seat very soon.

Florida politicos say Crist is "unbeatable" in a Republican primary, and a Quinnipiac poll from early April suggests as much: In a primary match-up between Crist and other potential GOP candidates, the governor trounced Rubio 54 percent to 8 percent. The same poll, however, found that 78 percent of Florida Republicans didn't know enough about Rubio to have an opinion about him.

That will change between now and the August 2010 primary, as the media flock to cover the most prominent conservative-versus-moderate Republican primary campaign in the country. When Republicans in Florida get to know Rubio, they will discover a dynamic speaker with an appealing biography and a deeply held conservative philosophy.

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In some respects, Rubio is a little like another state legislator who ran for the U.S. Senate, Barack Obama. Like the president, Rubio points to his biography as a testament to the American dream. The son of Cuban immigrants who fled Castro's regime, Rubio grew up in a working-class home—his father was a bartender and his mother a factory worker, casino maid, and Kmart stock clerk. He spent a year at Tarkio College in Missouri on a football scholarship before transferring to earn his bachelor's degree at the University of Florida and his law degree at the University of Miami. He married his longtime girlfriend Jeannette, once a Miami Dolphins cheerleader and now the mother of their four young children. Raised and confirmed a Catholic, Rubio worships with his family at an evangelical church.

Rubio rose rapidly in politics. Elected to the state house in 2000, he served as majority whip and majority leader before being named speaker for the 2007 and 2008 legislative sessions. He recently retired, as required by term-limits.

Like Obama, Rubio can thrill an audience. On April 13, he addressed the College Republicans and Students for a Free Cuba at George Washington University in Washington, D.C. Cuba, he said, presents us with "an opportunity just 90 miles off our shores to defend and stand up for the constitutional and Founding principles of this country."

Rubio called the U.S. embargo "our last and only leverage point" for negotiating Cuban freedom with a successor regime. He added, "I wish we could do in China what I hope we'll do in Cuba, but we can't. There are geopolitical realities."

The students—a sympathetic audience—were wowed by the speech, delivered without notes. "I think we just saw the future president of the United States!" exclaimed one undergrad leaving the event. "I just wanted to say thanks . . . for bringing us some hope in the GOP," another student told Rubio.

It's not only young Republicans who respond to Rubio. "You had the immediate impression that he would be a rising star," says Bob Sanchez, a former editorial board member of the *Miami Herald*, recalling Rubio's pitch for the paper's endorsement back in 1998 in a race for city commissioner. "He had a good philosophy and was able to express it. It's like when one of these people on *American Idol* really can sing, all of a sudden you really think, 'Wow, he was very impressive.'"

Rubio and Obama have little in common politically. Rubio is usually on the same page as his mentor, Jeb Bush. After a meeting with then-Governor Bush in 2005, Rubio developed a legislative agenda for conservative reform, which he describes as a marriage between a "big, bold contract with Florida concept" and Bush's suggestion that some of his own best ideas came from ordinary citizens who sent him emails or letters.

Marco Rubio

NEWSCOM

On the day he was designated speaker, Rubio gave house members each a book with blank pages titled *100 Innovative Ideas for Florida's Future*. He told his colleagues they would write it together, and he barnstormed the state holding "Idea-raisers" to come up with policy proposals on issues such as taxes, education, health care, transportation, and crime.

While the policy differences between Bush and Rubio are few—Bush supports and Rubio opposes a path to citizenship for illegal immigrants, for instance—Rubio often clashed with Charlie Crist, who was elected governor in 2006. Rubio challenged Crist on taxes, environmental issues, gambling, and more. Asked how he views Crist, Rubio told me, "I have disagreements with him on ideology but not on a personal basis."

He then landed a few punches, saying Crist's plan to impose "big-government mandates" to cap carbon emissions in Florida would hurt the economy with little return for the environment. Rubio criticized Crist's property tax reduction as "a cosmetic fix to a very serious problem." Rubio had unsuccessfully fought to abolish the property tax and replace it with a 2.5 percent consumption tax.

He also took aim at Crist's support for the stimulus package and especially his decision to campaign for it with Obama in Florida. "It's one thing to say you'll accept the funds from the federal government," Rubio said, "it's another to actively advocate those policies, which I think are disastrous for America."

Crist's vulnerabilities with conservatives go beyond fiscal issues. In March, he appointed a liberal judge to the state supreme court. Last year, Crist told *National Review* that he's "pro-life" but doesn't think *Roe* v. *Wade* should be overturned, and he couldn't name a single restriction on abortion he would call for in Florida. Rubio thinks *Roe* should be overturned on constitutional and moral grounds; he says simply: "Unborn children have the right to live."

However impressive, Rubio will have an uphill battle in the primary. Some voters may be turned off by his endorsement of Mike Huckabee in 2008, whom he backed mainly for supporting the "fair tax."

And some voters will simply prefer Crist, who easily defeated a more conservative challenger in a 2006 gubernatorial primary. Rubio himself said as recently as January that if Crist ran, other potential contenders for the Republican nomination "would step aside and acknowledge that Charlie Crist would be the best candidate." For GOP voters facing a filibuster-proof Senate, electability may trump all in 2010.

Still, Rubio has a bright political future whether or not he wins the nomination. Even an unsuccessful campaign will raise his profile for the day, sooner or later, when voters decide that liberalism is not the change we need. ♦

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'Why Can't a Girl Have a Penis?'

and other major issues in educational research.

By Charlotte Allen

San Diego

There he was, Bill Ayers himself, sitting in a Marriott conference room waiting to partake in a session of the annual meeting of the American Educational Research Association (AERA). The former Weatherman, "unapologetic" (his own word) fugitive from justice, and hot potato of the far left whose acquaintance with Barack Obama in Chicago during the 1990s and unrepentant boasting about Weatherman bombings at the Pentagon and U.S. Capitol in the 1970s, prompted the Republican vice presidential candidate Sarah Palin to accuse Obama of "palling around with terrorists"—and the University of Nebraska to cancel a planned speech by Ayers last October.

No matter: Plenty of other colleges have been happy to have Ayers at their podia in light of his Obama connection and the attention-getting frisson of notoriety that he brings with him wherever he goes. Ayers is now a "distinguished" professor in the education school at the University of Illinois-Chicago and the author of numerous manifestoes and memoirs (his most recent, coauthored with his equally radical wife, Bernardine Dohrn, a law professor at Northwestern University, is *Race Course: Against White Supremacy*), and he is something of an AERA celebrity these days, having been elected vice president of its curriculum-studies division—which specializes in research on what teachers teach, both at the ed-school level and in the K-12 classrooms where most ed-school graduates find employment. He participated in no fewer than seven panels and events at this year's convention. AERA, by the way, with 25,000 members, is the leading scholarly organization for professors at U.S. education schools—the people who teach the teachers who teach your children. Its annual meeting drew nearly 14,000 people to the San Diego Convention Center in April.

Even at 64, and getting long in the revolutionary tooth, Ayers didn't look too different from the way he looked nearly 40 years ago in his "Wanted" poster (for involvement in bombings, although the charges were eventually dropped on grounds of improper FBI surveillance)—as long as you mentally corrected for his over-the-dome-receded hair, which is still youthfully unkempt. His AERA ensemble consisted of a rumpled black jacket and hipster T-shirt, Sixties-tastic bell-bottom jeans, a silver ring circling the lobe of each ear, elaborately quilted Mos Def party-ready high-top sneakers, and, most significantly, a rainbow armband (in Ayers's case dangling out of a pocket) that signaled solidarity with the gay and lesbian activists who opposed the passage in November of Proposition 8, California's ban on same-sex marriage. At this particular session, titled "Public Pedagogy and Social Action: Examinations and Portraits," Ayers was chairman of the panel.

If Ayers's appearance said, "I've still got radical street cred," so did his words. While waiting for the session to start, he commiserated with a colleague over Arizona State University's decision not to award an honorary doctorate to President Obama when he speaks at commencement this month, citing lack of lifelong achievements. "They're doing the same thing to him at Notre Dame," said Ayers in an apparent reference to the controversy surrounding the president's invitation to speak at a Catholic college's commencement after mandating federal subsidies for abortion a few days into his term. Ayers wasn't mincing words when it came to real or imagined slights to his fellow Chicagoan. "I think it's very interesting, this demonization of him," he told his friend.

In possible recognition of Ayers's revived celebrity, the meeting room was packed: more than 50 people, many of them sporting the same gay-solidarity rainbow armband

Charlotte Allen, a contributing editor to the Manhattan Institute's Minding the Campus website, is writing her doctoral dissertation in medieval and Byzantine studies.

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that Ayers wore. (Fifty was an unusually large audience for a session at this AERA meeting, probably because panelists had trouble competing with the allure of sunny seaside San Diego; at some sessions panelists outnumbered their listeners.) The room quieted when William Schubert, a black-clad, armband-wearing fellow education professor at Illinois-Chicago, introduced the social-action theme of the session by declaring, "The project of education is the project of composing a life."

After a few dismissive words apparently aimed at the practice of requiring education majors to obtain a basic arts-and-sciences grounding alongside their pedagogic fare, Schubert introduced the first panelist, Jennifer April Sandlin of Arizona State. Her research had consisted of email interviews with Reverend Billy, an Elvis-haired anti-Wal-Mart street preacher who is currently running as Green party candidate for mayor of New York and whom Sandlin presented as an example of public pedagogy.

Sandlin's interview questions, laminated in triple-clad academic jargon, had evidently flummoxed Reverend Billy. "Why don't you professors stop leaning further and further into your private world?" he had complained in an email to Sandlin. Her explication of the preacher's message, aided by her coresearcher, Jake Burdick, included the following words and phrases: "bounded space," "reinscribe," "alterity," "counter-hegemonic," "imperialistic legacy," "Euro-Western perspective," "polymodal discourse," "the politics of representation," "reflexivity of discomfort," "legitimization," "colonized," "transgressive," and "the dialogic process of being human." I knew how Reverend Billy felt.

More papers on the theme of public pedagogy and social action followed. In one, titled "Youth Talks Back," a rainbow wristband-wearing Sharon Chappell of Arizona State described a gay-teen theater project titled "Encounters in/through the Body" and a project titled "In My Hood," in which black teens in East Palo Alto, California, painted anti-gentrification murals on the walls of a community center. Brian Schultz of Northeastern Illinois University then denounced No Child Left Behind, the 2002 federal law that limits federal funds to schools whose students don't achieve desired scores on standardized tests. "We don't allow a lot of creativity in classrooms," Schultz lamented, opining that in a truly creative setting, "the participants would decide what's appropriate for them to learn."

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THOMAS FLUHARTY

Finally Ayers rose to speak—delivering an impromptu-sounding ramble that had little to do with murals or creativity in classrooms. He named his two heroes: "Martin Luther King and Harvey Milk." He voiced dialectical doubts: "Multicultural education started in insurgency against pedagogical racism," he declared. "Then it became the new norm. We have to ask: What are the dogmas that we're creating now?"

On that last point I was in hearty agreement. I was starting to warm up to Ayers when he abruptly concluded, "Ken Klein and Rush Limbaugh are brilliant public pedagogues, except that they inspire fear and acquiescence." The reference to Limbaugh I got—but Ken Klein? Who he? I googled Klein's name a few days after the meeting and came across a onetime Houston Oilers defensive back who had converted from Judaism to Christianity in 1969 and now lives in Oregon, where he produces DVDs about biblical prophecies. Ayers did not reply to my email inquiring about the exact identity of his own Ken Klein, but it said something telling about Ayers's mind that he apparently conflated an obscure maker of Christian videos with the most popular radio talk-show host in America.

I vainly searched for a single session that dissented from the baseline principle of progressive education: that teachers shouldn't directly impart information to their students but instead function as 'guides.'

Okay, maybe "Public Pedagogy and Social Action" was a radical outlier among the hundreds of sessions offered at the AERA meeting. Surely the Ayers session's combination of impenetrable poststructuralist cultural critique, back-to-the-Sixties—or maybe the Thirties—social protest (murals, yet!), and radical theories of progressive education is not representative of how most ed schools teach teachers how to teach. Yet there was plenty of evidence that it was.

During my four days at the AERA meeting, I vainly searched for a single session whose panelists expressed some dissent from the baseline principle of progressive education: that teachers shouldn't directly impart information to their students but instead function as "guides," gently coaching them to "construct" their own knowledge about the subject at hand out of what they already know or don't know.

"Everyone here is a constructivist," Gabriel Reich, a genial education professor at Virginia Commonwealth University, told me at a reception sponsored by the John Dewey Society. (Dewey, a pragmatist philosopher who died in 1952 and taught for years at Columbia Teachers College, is

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regarded, alongside the Swiss cognitive psychologist Jean Piaget, as one of the fathers of progressive education.) Reich was trying to explain to me why it was presumptuous for professional mathematicians (and many parents) to be up in arms about the currently fashionable constructivist idea that instead of explaining to youngsters, say, how to do long division, teachers should let them count, subtract, make an educated guess, or otherwise figure out their own ways to solve division problems. College math professors may complain that young people taught the constructivist way arrive in their classrooms unable to perform the basic operations necessary to move on to calculus, but so what? "Why should we privilege professional mathematicians?" Reich asked. Long division, multiplication—"those are just algorithms, and a calculator can do them faster than we can. Most of the people here at this meeting don't think of themselves as good at math, and they don't think math is creative. [The constructivist approach] is a way to make math creative for many people who never thought of it that way."

There are no wrong answers in constructivist theory, so Reich, pursuing his mathematical theme, had a tough sell the next day when he presented a paper to his fellow educators arguing that the principles of constructivism should be modified a bit in teaching arithmetic. "I know some constructivists might take issue with what I'm saying," was his delicate way of telling his audience that when a student says two and two equals five, there might be a problem, if only with the child's non-constructivist parents who might have "right-answer" concerns. Reich was suggesting that the youngster's incorrect (or "incorrect") answer be "vetted by the class" to see if it "works." That way, he explained, "the students are learning to act as members of a mathematical community—they are becoming mathematicians."

Why should we privilege mathematicians, asked Gabriel Reich? When a student says two and two equals five, the youngster's incorrect (or 'incorrect') answer can be 'vetted by the class' to see if it 'works.'

It might strike an outsider to the world of ed schools as absurd to spend multiple minutes of precious math-class time having other students "vet" answers to problems that a teacher could explain quickly using simple objects. But a sense of disconnect between the pedagogic theory taught to ed-school students (nowadays called "preservice teachers") and their lived classroom experience after graduation pervaded the AERA sessions.

This was most evident at a session on "restorative justice," a trendy new technique for "classroom management" and dealing with teachers' biggest headache: disruptive and disobedient kids. Brenda Elizabeth Morrison, an education professor at Simon Fraser University, demonstrated "circle time," a restorative-justice alternative to expelling, suspending, or otherwise disciplining students who indulge in antisocial behavior. The aim was to create what Morrison called "communities of relationships instead of communities of rules."

In order to make us feel what circle time feels like (education theorists believe that future teachers should personally experience everything they teach their students), Morrison arranged the 15 of us in the room (four panelists plus an audience of 11) in a circle and had us pass around a small boulder on which was painted the all-caps word "HOPE." The mini-boulder was our "talking piece"—an "indigenous way of sharing stories and ideas," Morrison explained. Via the talking piece students are supposed to devise their own sanctions for "mistakes," as the restorative-justice people call actions like textmessaging in class, throwing objects, threatening the teacher, stealing, and other acts of malfeasance. Call me cynical, but I immediately thought of another good use for the talking piece besides restorative justice: dragging out circle time until it was too late for that history quiz I forgot to study for.

In a session titled "Cross-Cultural Conversations," Margaret Zidon and Jill Shafer of the University of North Dakota presented a research paper about exposing "Euro-American" students in a required adolescent-development class to "cultural diversity." Since nearly 100 percent of the population of North Dakota is of Scandinavian origin, the pair had a tough time finding culturally diverse people on campus to whom their students could be exposed. They eventually came up with a mostly Muslim group of foreign students studying English as a second language.

Like much research under ed-school auspices, Zidon's and Shafer's paper consisted mostly of a narrative description of their diversity experiment larded with citations to other scholarly papers. (The No Child Left Behind Act tried to set more rigorous standards for "scientifically based" educational research by requiring the retesting of observational data, but in 2008 AERA issued its own looser definition of "scientifically based" that gives broader license to anecdotal studies.) Zidon and Shafer teamed ed students and foreign students for weekly conversations and had the ed students write "reflective papers" about the encounters ("I got to participate in two of the Ramadan activities. . . . That was really neat for me") and respond to a 12-item questionnaire ("I have learned about myself. . . . I recognize how

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some of my behaviors might be offensive to people of other cultures") that Zidon and Shafer characterized as the "quantitative" aspect of their research. Again as is typical of much research under ed-school auspices, Zidon and Shafer pronounced their experiment a rousing success, even though they admitted it had little to do with adolescent development: "Preservice teachers . . . learned that culture and language differences clearly impact teaching and learning."

Another session, titled "Teaching and Assessing 21st-Century Skills," was premised on the idea that schools ought to focus, not on imparting content—such as history, science, and so forth—but on getting their students up to speed on how to function in the fast-changing employment market of the 21st century by learning how to use computers and how to work with their fellows on a "project" (that is what people do at their jobs nowadays, isn't it?). Once young people get their 21st-century skills down, the thinking goes, they can learn and plug in whatever specific knowledge they need: math, physics, and engineering if they're designing a bike path, and so forth. Addressing an audience of nearly a hundred people (a huge crowd for AERA), the six advocates for "project-based learning," as it is called, fairly bristled with Dilbert-esque office lingo as they urged teachers to turn their classrooms into replicas of technology-intense workplaces: "deliverables," "teamwork," "feedback," "use cases," "design patterns," "meta-cognitive," "framing," "the next level of learning." They had also mastered that 21st-century skill par excellence: the PowerPoint presentation, read aloud line by line and bullet point by bullet point. Indeed, a PowerPoint screen displaying a verbatim version of the speech plus more bullets than flew at the St. Valentine's Day Massacre was a feature of nearly every AERA session I attended.

Yet it was the overtly political content of many of the AERA offerings that provided the richest mix of exasperation and entertainment. Even the accommodations were politicized. One of the three participating hotels, the Manchester Grand Hyatt, next door to the Marriott, had become the Carrie Prejean of lodgings after it emerged that the Hyatt's owner, Doug Manchester, had donated $125,000 to the campaign for Proposition 8. Not only did AERA decide to schedule only a minimal number of events there, but a dozen or so gays and lesbians with bullhorns—joined by some Hyatt chambermaids protesting what they said was an oppressive workload—chanted, passed out fliers, and beat percussion instruments from early in the morning until after dark. It was impossible to walk from the pariah Hyatt to the politically acceptable Marriott without passing through a gauntlet of gays, lesbians, and chambermaids shouting, "Don't stay at the Hyatt—check out now!"

At the AERA sessions, I lived in an ideological Bizarro World in which "school reform" did not mean improving classroom instruction but rather, handing over multimillion-dollar state grants (in Illinois) to the control of, among other entities, the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN)—a group being prosecuted for alleged voter-registration fraud in the 2008 election—so that ACORN can help direct the subsidization of the candidates of its choice for ed-school training. It was a world in which at a session on Queer Theory, one teacher-panelist announced, "I'll sometimes ask my students, 'Why can't a girl have a penis?' and you know, they start asking themselves the same question: Why can't a girl have a penis? Why can't a girl with a penis wear a skirt?"

Besides excoriating No Child Left Behind and standardized tests, participants consigned a wide variety of entities and people to eternal damnation. There was Channel One, the in-school news program that includes two minutes of commercials ("selling kids to business," said one professor). There was Arne Duncan, Obama's education secretary, who as head of the Chicago public school system from 2001 to 2008, raised test scores and graduation rates but roiled teachers' unions by closing some underperforming schools and converting others to charter schools, independent city-funded entities that can bypass teachers' unions and their seniority-based pay scales and constraints on firing incompetent teachers. Not unexpectedly, charter schools themselves were a frequent target. So were the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education (in 2006 it dropped a recommendation that ed-school students demonstrate their commitment to "social justice" in order to graduate) and Teach for America, the program that sends new college graduates into troubled urban and rural schools for two-year stints, allowing them to start teaching without obtaining an ed-school degree. Teach for America is wildly popular among young people (35,000 applicants, many from top-rated colleges, applied for 4,000 slots this year), and Obama praised the organization in an April 21 speech. But at AERA, Teach for America was a target of constant obloquy, perhaps because its very existence suggests that large parts of the training at ed schools might be unnecessary.

One AERA participant accused Teach for America of being a form of "taking up the white man's burden." At a session titled "Critical Education and the Eclipse of Liber-

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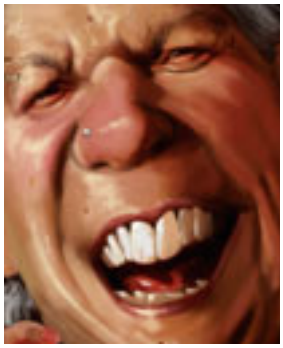
alism," Heidi Katherine Pitzer of Syracuse University made a presentation filled with PowerPoint screen shots of Teach for America's website and arcane pronunciamentos drawn from postcolonialist theory ("servants of global production," "gendered ideologies of blame"). Her point seemed to be that Teach for America teachers are pampered suburban whites (70 percent of them are white, close to the ratio for the population as a whole) lording it over the ethnic-minority regular teachers who staff inner-city schools. "Their two-year commitment—that's like being a tourist," said Pitzer. The heroine of the anti-Teach for America crowd is Stanford ed-school professor Linda Darling-Hammond, who has been denouncing Teach for America practically since the program's inception in 1990. She insists that teachers who don't go through conventional ed-school programs can't teach effectively. She had been Duncan's chief competitor for the post of education secretary and the favorite of AERA radicals, including Ayers. (Darling-Hammond spoke at several sessions.)

Pitzer also described Teach for America as a "neoliberal organizing technology." As it turned out, calling someone a "neoliberal" at the AERA meeting was the equivalent of calling someone a "pinko" during the McCarthy era. I had no idea exactly what a neoliberal was. I'd always thought it referred to the centrist Democrats of the Clinton administration: liberals who had their heads on straight about some issues, such as welfare reform. It took me several days to figure out that "neoliberal" is the new way of saying "neoconservative" in academia. Thus, "neoliberal" and "neoliberalism" (both bad) appeared in the titles and content of almost as many AERA sessions and papers ("progressive neoliberalism," "neoliberal communities of color") as "social justice" (good).



Another name hitherto unfamiliar to me was that of Paolo Freire, who turned out to have been a bald, white-bearded Brazilian who looked like Santa Claus in the old Coke ads and whose 1968 book *The Pedagogy of the Oppressed* is required reading in many an ed-school course. Freire, though dead for more than a decade, has become quite the educational guru, with an entire AERA session devoted to his teachings. His name frequented the PowerPoint screens, along with those of Dewey and Bell Hooks—sorry, I mean, bell hooks—a feminist educational theorist who wrote (I copied this off PowerPoint), "Men and women are human beings because they are historically constituted as beings of praxis."

The high point of the meeting, as far as I was concerned, however, was the evening get-together of AERA's Marxist section. They claim 158 members, and as far as I could count, nearly every one of them was in attendance, helping themselves to the buffet (to each according to his need!), trilling their r's and continentalizing their vowels in Third World-revolutionary solidarity ("Ah-boo Grra-eeb," "Ahf-ghahn-ee-stahn," "Kooba"), introducing colleagues as "my comrade," and holding conversations like this one:

"How long have you been a Marxist?"

"Twenty-five years."

"Would you like to help edit our journal?"

The keynote speech, by Peter McLaren, a wild-haired education professor at the University of California at Los Angeles, was an experience not to be missed (same goes for his UCLA web page, www.gseis.ucla.edu/faculty/pages/mclaren/). McLaren's theme, as it is so frequently with Marxists, was the imminent demise of capitalism: "What does it mean for teachers and education?" A Niagara of unscripted and extravagantly unintelligible eloquence poured from his lips: "The great unraveling! . . . The terrifying clarity of living in the underside of terror and shame! . . . The coloniality of power! . . . The globalization of whiteness! . . . The crisis has been pending for more than half a millennium!"

By the time McLaren wrapped up ("From the context of global totality, armed antagonistic agency feeds the hammer fist of capitalism!"), I had started giggling—and so, I observed, had some of the Marxists in the audience. "I want to end with a quotation from Che Gueva-rrra, who, as you know, received an honorary doctorate of pedagogy in Kooba," McLaren said, "but I can't find it, so I'm going to make up a quotation of my own." Everyone was laughing by the time McLaren thundered something out in Spanish. A PowerPoint screen flashed a photo of Hugo Chávez captioned "Venezuela—a beacon of Hope."

These were the teachers of the teachers who teach our children.

Still, all was not hopeless. For one thing, large numbers of attendees simply ignored the research sessions and treated the meeting like a tax-deductible California vacation. "I made my presentation, so tomorrow we're going to get massages," I overheard one of them saying into her cell-phone. The lounges of the Marriott (and even the Hyatt) were chronically crowded with AERA-ites in resort-wear relaxing and taking in the views of sailboats, palm trees, and blooming birds-of-paradise during a Starbucks hour that lasted most of the day, followed by a cocktail hour that started at around four in the afternoon.

Furthermore, some of the presentations actually did

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involve research that might be of practical use to teachers in the classroom trenches, including several presentations dealing with new findings by neuroscientists about the human brain—perhaps paving the way for pedagogic principles based on scientific evidence of children's learning processes rather than constructivist philosophy. Several panelists on "Teaching and Assessing 21st-Century Skills" complained about a "backlash" among politicians and newspaper editorialists wondering why students weren't learning anything substantive—which sounded like a healthy development. At a session on charter schools, René Antrop-González, an education professor at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and a self-described Marxist, broke with teachers'-union orthodoxy to endorse charter schools for Milwaukee, given that the city's notoriously poor public-school system costs $1.23 billion a year to operate (mostly to fund administration) and produces a more than 50 percent dropout rate. "People ask me, 'What kind of a Marxist are you?' but I ask, 'Why have so many progressive educators rejected school choice?'"

Most surprising was a paper presented by Cory Hansen, an education professor at Arizona State, in a Teach for America session. Instead of the expected put-downs of teachers not "properly prepared" (by taking a full roster of ed-school courses before they took over a classroom) or of neoliberalism-induced class conflict, Hansen recounted the things that she and her fellow professors had learned while teaching education courses at night in an evening master's program for Teach for America teachers staffing elementary classrooms in some of Phoenix's worst neighborhoods. Teach for America teachers, already overworked and beset by myriad real-life problems at their schools, had little use for abstract ideological theorizing and demanded quick, practical training: real lesson plans and classroom-management techniques that worked. In their course evaluations they brutally criticized the program, which had been adapted from the traditional education program at Arizona State: "Some professors talk down to us." "I am sick of coloring for a master's degree."

"They slammed the instructors in their evaluations," Hansen said. Starting the next semester, she said, the professors completely revamped the Teach for America program. After the conference I called Hansen and also Heather Carter, who directs the Teach for America program at Arizona State, to hear more about the changes they had made. "We needed to make really valuable use of their time," Carter said. "This is what you have to do in alternative certification programs. We have to give them coherence, teach them how to teach specific things." Both Carter and Hansen said that the changes they made for Teach for America have given them insight into possible changes in their traditional program.

Teach for America was a target of constant obloquy at AERA, perhaps because its very existence suggests that large parts of the training at ed schools might be unnecessary.

Attending an AERA convention can give you the impression that the best thing that could happen to American education might be to shut down education schools. But professors like Hansen and Carter gave me hope that a highly focused ed-school program could turn out first-rate instructors. It could also help reduce America's desperate shortage of math and science teachers by attracting talented college students who might want to make careers out of teaching young people but are turned off by the mix of lightweight courses, make-work assignments, and tired progressive ideology that characterizes the process of getting certified.

In an April 10 article for the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, James Fraser, education professor at New York University and senior vice president for programs at the Woodrow Wilson National Fellowship Foundation, argued that what ed schools need is a clear standard of excellence in professional training, resembling the standards for medical schools. Such an ed-school "gold standard" would combine academic rigor with extensive clinical exposure in real-life classrooms, Fraser wrote. (The Wilson Foundation intends to start implementing Fraser's idea this fall by covering the tuition and living costs of 60 fellows entering master's programs at Indiana universities that have overhauled their education programs in order to attract high-quality applicants.)

"We can't give up on education schools altogether," Fraser told me in a telephone interview. "About 25 percent of them have turned the corner and fundamentally reevaluated their curriculum, so that you have mathematicians teaching math and historians teaching history. In Massachusetts, every teacher has to have a liberal arts degree. The rest are still the old school. That's what we're trying to change."

Fraser's proposals sound like a parent's dream, and the dream of anyone serious about educating young people—but if every ed school in America implemented them, the AERA convention would be a lot less zany fun. And where would Bill Ayers go? ♦

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God and Obama at Notre Dame

The clash between Catholic culture and Catholic colleges

By Joseph Bottum

All across campus, the flowers have begun to bloom, their dull Indiana roots stirred by the spring rain, and the grass is almost green again at Notre Dame. Beneath a 16-foot statue of the Blessed Virgin, the main administration building sits, as always, its gold dome sparkling in the warm spring sun.

Meanwhile, in the offices of the college chapel—some chapel: the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, with a 230-foot spire and the world's largest collection of 19th-century French stained glass—young couples are meeting with deacons to plan the alumni weddings that run nonstop through the spring and summer. The Grotto of Our Lady of Lourdes flickers with candles, lit by anxious students as they prepare for final exams. The 14-story mosaic of Jesus, arms in the air, signals a perpetual touchdown on the side of the Hesburgh Library. The girls wear shorts, the boys wear jeans, and the gossip is all about next year's football team.

Oh, and a small plane crisscrosses the sky above campus, dragging an enormous picture of a bloody fetus. The wild-eyed and news-hungry pro-life activist Randall Terry is being hauled away by the police for trespassing. Graduate students from the theology department, their faces twisted red in fury, are screaming "Torturer!" at former Bush-speechwriter William McGurn as he tries to give a campus lecture on abortion. The local bishop has declared he will boycott the graduation ceremonies, the Secret Service has announced its fears of violence, and the university's president has retreated in a snit to his office—venturing out only to make snide remarks about his fellow Catholics before he closets himself again. The official Notre Dame website has dealt with the circus by featuring a desperately uncontroversial photograph of the school's annual Eucharistic Procession, a kind of pathetic little lie that, really, there's nothing much happening here in South Bend, Indiana: *No, sir, no need to worry. No need to worry, at all.*

Welcome to 2009 at the most famously Catholic school in America. Welcome to Catholic education in the 21st century.

What's causing all the noise at Notre Dame is the announcement that President Barack Obama will be receiving an honorary law degree at commencement on May 17. There's not much use in pretending that Obama doesn't support legalized abortion. This is the man, after all, who voted against the Born-Alive Infants Protection Act when it was in the Illinois state legislature—the man who, by rescinding the Mexico City policy three days after he took office, now has American tax dollars paying for abortions in foreign countries, and the man who used a televised campaign appearance at an evangelical church to dismiss the moral question of abortion as "above my pay grade." Who was he kidding? He told the world flat out where he stands when he said he wouldn't want any daughter of his who made a mistake to be "punished" with a child.

For that matter, there's not much use in pretending that Catholic legal analysis isn't opposed to abortion. Do all the casuistry you want. Bring in the sharpest canon lawyers from Marquette, and the cleverest Catholic ward-heelers from Chicago, and the slipperiest Jesuits from Georgetown. Sit them all down and show them again the tape of Mario Cuomo's 1984 speech about abortion at Notre Dame—you remember, the famous "personally opposed, but publicly supportive" speech that has provided Catholic politicians with talking points for 25 years—and let them spin the president's May 17 visit to campus as hard as they can. Still, there's something peculiar about the honoring of Barack Obama with a Catholic *law* degree. Couldn't they have made it a degree in sociology or something?

Ah, well, an honorary doctorate of law it is, and now the Catholic faithful are up in arms across the nation. A couple thousand of them are camped out in South Bend,

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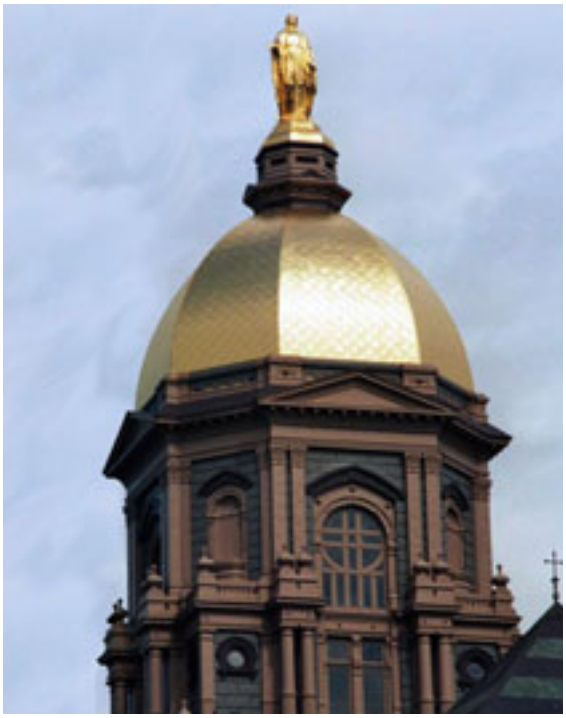
parading past the campus gates with rosaries and placards. A tiny Catholic group called the Cardinal Newman Society jumped on the story and in just over a month collected more than 350,000 signatures for a petition denouncing Notre Dame. Another website announced that it had received, in a single week, pledges to withhold from the school $8.2 million in planned donations.

Of course, the protesters are not the only ones angry. Obama has plenty of Catholic supporters: He won 54 percent of the Catholic vote in the last election, after all, and at least 45 percent of the vote of Mass-going Catholics. A once fairly respectable Catholic law professor named Douglas Kmiec had committed nearly every sin short of mopery to make Mitt Romney the 2008 Republican nominee, but when that campaign stumbled and fell, he took to *Slate* magazine to declare, "Beyond life issues, an audaciously hope-filled Democrat like Obama is a Catholic natural."

And maybe even without going beyond the life issues: Two months before Election Day, Kmiec published *Can a Catholic Support Him? Asking the Big Questions about Barack Obama*—a book in which he insisted that Obama, in the secret places of his heart, is actually against abortion, and, anyway, unlike the evil John McCain, he wants to help the poor, and when the poor aren't poor anymore, they'll stop having abortions, so the pro-choice Obama is more *objectively* pro-life than any pro-life Republican could possibly be.



The golden dome of the administration building

Unsurprisingly, Douglas Kmiec is not happy with the protesters at Notre Dame: "Jesus' method was one of inclusion, teaching with generosity, forgiveness, and truth—not snubbing those in high office," he recently observed, forgetting, perhaps, Jesus' encounter with that high-office-holder Pontius Pilate. And Obama's other Catholic admirers are equally irate. The left-leaning Jesuit magazine *America*, for instance, harrumphed its support of "Catholic intellectuals who defend the richer, subtly nuanced, broad-tent Catholic tradition."

Something in that adjectival pile-up—ah, the rich, subtle nuance!—makes it sound more like wine tasting than ecclesiology, but *America* was soon joined by the other old-line American Catholic magazine, *Commonweal*, which could not bring itself to express the least sympathy for the protesters. On the *First Things* website, a young woman named Lacy Dodd published an account of her pregnancy during her senior year and the pressure her boyfriend applied to talk her into an abortion. "Who draws support from your decision to honor President Obama," she reasonably asked her alma mater, "the young, pregnant Notre Dame woman sitting in that graduating class who wants desperately to keep her baby, or the Notre Dame man who believes that the Catholic teaching on the intrinsic evil of abortion is just dining-room talk?" *Commonweal* put a notice of the article on its own website, and 83 comments later, the young woman had been called everything but a slut. Her story was "flimsy," "manipulative," "hardly fair," a "negative stereotype," "polemical"—and she was just "a horny kid," one of the "victims of the Russian roulette moral theory of premarital sex" so rampant in the protesters' troglodyte version of Catholicism.

Even some conservatives, Obama's natural opponents, took the school's side and denounced Mary Ann Glendon for refusing this year's Laetare Medal, Notre Dame's annual honor for service to the Church and society. A Harvard law professor, author of the widely cited *Rights Talk*, and the former U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, Glendon is well known for her basic niceness and her well-mannered willingness to join attempts at coalition building between left and right.

Her decision was no personal caprice. Back in 2004, the American bishops reached a compromise between their own left and right contingents and issued a carefully worded document called "Catholics in Political Life." "Catholic institutions should *not honor* those who act in defiance of our fundamental moral principles," the bishops agreed [emphasis in the original]. "[Such people] should not be given awards, honors or platforms which would suggest support for their actions." In part, this explains why, at the present moment, not a single American bishop is supporting Notre Dame in its clash with

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the bishop of South Bend, John D'Arcy—and bishops from 68 of the 195 American dioceses have publicly chastised the school. What was the point of all that careful work by the bishops if Catholic institutions are simply going to ignore it?

Anyway, Glendon had first accepted the invitation to receive the medal back in December. In March came the announcement of Obama's honorary degree, and then the school's lashing out at critics, and then the leaking of Notre Dame's official talking points, which instructed the university's spokesmen to reply to complaints: "President Obama won't be doing all the talking. Mary Ann Glendon, the former U.S. ambassador to the Vatican, will be speaking as the recipient of the Laetare Medal." Glendon decided she didn't much like being a makeweight, so she wrote on April 27 to decline the medal, saying that Notre Dame's refusal even to speak with its local bishop threatened a "ripple effect" that could lead "other Catholic schools . . . to disregard the bishops' guidelines." The university's president, Fr. John Jenkins, had ratcheted the situation up, and up, and up, until even the gracious Mary Ann Glendon was forced to choose between the bishops and Notre Dame. What made them imagine she could possibly choose Notre Dame?

Operation Rescue protesters across the street from the White House

NEWSCOM

That wasn't how some saw it, of course. The comments about Glendon left, for example, on the libertarian law professors' blog *The Volokh Conspiracy* are well worth reading: a hilariously incoherent recital of a hundred years' worth of anti-Catholic tropes—mashed together with the thin-skinned reaction of Obama's supporters to any criticism of their leader and spiced with a conservative complaint that Glendon is childishly picking up her ball and going home, retreating into irrelevance instead of fighting the good fight.

What all these critics of Glendon share is a sense that Catholic unhappiness with Notre Dame must be about politics. "There is a political game going on here, and part of that is that you demonize the people who disagree with you, you question their integrity, you challenge their character, and you brand these people as moral poison," Fr. Kenneth Himes, chairman of the theology department at Boston College, complained to the *Boston Globe*. As James Taranto of the *Wall Street Journal* noted, this was the same Fr. Himes who in 2006 wrote the faculty a letter objecting to an honorary degree for Condoleezza Rice—a letter that read, "On the levels of both moral principle and practical moral judgment, Secretary Rice's approach to international affairs is in fundamental conflict with Boston College's commitment to the values of the Catholic and Jesuit traditions and is inconsistent with the humanistic values that inspire the university's work."

You could cut the irony with a knife: It's only demonizing when conservatives do it. Still Fr. Himes joins Douglas Kmiec, and *America*, and *Commonweal*, and the administration of Notre Dame, and most of the newspaper columnists who've weighed in on the controversy, and a surprising number of conservatives. They all look at the Notre Dame protests and think it must be about politics. Bad politics or good politics, take your pick. But politics all the way down.

As it happens, they're wrong. Politics has very little to do with the mess. This isn't a fight about who won the last presidential election and how he's going to deal with abortion. It's a fight about culture—the culture of American Catholicism, and how Notre Dame, still living in a 1970s Catholic world, has suddenly awakened to find itself out of date.

The role of culture is what Fr. Jenkins at Notre Dame and many other presidents of Catholic colleges don't quite get, and their lack of culture is what makes them sometimes seem so un-Catholic—though the charge befuddles them whenever it is made. As perhaps it ought. They know very well that they are Catholics: They go to Mass, and they pray, and their faith is real, and their theology is sophisticated, and what right has a bunch of other Catholics to run around accusing them of failing to be Catholic?

But, in fact, they live in a different world from most American Catholics. Opposition to abortion doesn't stand at the center of Catholic theology. It doesn't even stand at the center of Catholic faith. It does stand, however, at the center of Catholic culture in this country.

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Opposition to abortion is the signpost at the intersection of Catholicism and American public life. And those who—by inclination or politics—fail to grasp this fact will all eventually find themselves in the situation that Fr. Jenkins has now created for himself. Culturally out of touch, they rail that the antagonism must derive from politics. But it doesn't. It derives from the sense of the faithful that abortion is important. It derives from the feeling of many ordinary Catholics that the Church ought to stand for something in public life—and that something is opposition to abortion.

Fr. Himes went on to tell the *Boston Globe*, "Some people have simply reduced Catholicism to the abortion issue, and, consequently, they have simply launched a crusade to bar anything from Catholic institutions that smacks of any sort of open conversation." Of course, here, too, there's a level of irony: Out at Notre Dame, the president, Fr. Jenkins, has defended his choice of Obama on the grounds of "conversation," but, now in full-lock down mode, the school hasn't actually scheduled any conversations or debates on the topic. They did invite the 82-year-old Judge John T. Noonan to take Mary Ann Glendon's place on the platform, and he is not, by any means, an unfaithful Catholic or a supporter of abortion. He has the reputation, however, of being one of the dullest speakers in captivity, and the school can't really expect him to provide much "conversation partnership," as Notre Dame calls it, for Barack Obama and his quicksilver rhetoric.

Still, in a peculiar way, Himes is right that "some people have simply reduced Catholicism to the abortion issue." It is a horrifying fact, in many ways, that *Roe* v. *Wade* has done more to provide Catholic identity than any other event of the last 50 years. Still, for American Catholics, the Church is a refuge and bulwark against an ambient culture that erodes morality and undermines families. Catholic culture is their counterculture, their means of upholding the dignity of the human person and the integrity of family—and, in that context, the centrality of abortion for American Catholic culture seems much less arbitrary than it first appeared.

This is what the leaders of Notre Dame need to grasp. They do not necessarily have bad theology when they equate the life issues with other concerns. They do not necessarily have bad faith just because they say that war and capital punishment outweigh the million babies killed every year in this country by abortion. But they lack the cultural marker that would make them Catholic in the minds of other Catholics. Abortion is not the only life issue, but it is the one that bears most directly on the lives of ordinary Catholics as they swim against the current to preserve family life. And until Catholic universities understand this, they will not be Catholic—in a very real, existential sense.

Out in Indiana, the flowers are still blooming, the dome is still sparkling, and the protests are still going. Randall Terry promised, "We will make this a circus," and he has certainly tried. Alan Keyes has announced his own Notre Dame protest, complete with his plans to be arrested. "There are unintended consequences to this kind of angry, vituperative language about their opponents," a liberal Catholic named Patrick Whelan grandly told the *San Jose Mercury News*. "By making themselves pawns of the conservative right, the bishops are playing into a cycle of decline for our Church." And on the South Bend circus goes.

Any Catholic with an ounce of awareness knew this fight was coming. The ordinary Catholic Church and the Catholic colleges were bound to clash, and it's a little unfortunate that it actually spilled into public view with a visit of the president of the United States to the campus of Notre Dame. A better place to make all this public might have been the Sacred Heart University dinner this spring, which honored the pro-abortion activist Kerry Kennedy. Or the Xavier University commencement, which is honoring the pro-abortion political strategist Donna Brazile. Or the University of San Francisco graduation, which is honoring the pro-abortion district attorney (and prominent Proposition 8 opponent) Kamala Harris.

For that matter, the fight should have been held in April, when Georgetown University accommodated President Obama's handlers by covering up the IHS, the monogram for Jesus, on the wall behind the rostrum when Obama spoke on campus. You'd think this really would mark the end for Georgetown. The school typically shrugs off criticism of its lack of Catholicism by proudly declaring its "Jesuit Tradition," but the IHS monogram was the symbol for the Jesuits that St. Ignatius Loyola himself chose when he founded the society in the 16th century.

There are reasons, however, that the struggle over Catholic culture broke into open battle over a visit of Barack Obama to Notre Dame. In part, it's simply because Obama is the president and a whole lot more prominent than Kerry Kennedy or Donna Brazile or Kamala Harris. But in greater part, it's because Notre Dame is, well, Notre Dame: home of the gold dome, the basilica, the grotto, and Touchdown Jesus. If Georgetown doesn't appear Catholic to ordinary Catholics, that's just Georgetown. But if Notre Dame is shaky—if the most identifiably Catholic place in America doesn't seem Catholic—then the old connection between Catholic culture and Catholic institutions and the Catholic Church really is broken beyond repair. And where will Catholics send their children to school then? ♦

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Lawcrime

The first thing we do, let's prosecute all the lawyers

By Tod Lindberg

The question of whether to open a criminal investigation into the conduct of Bush administration officials with regard to interrogation methods for detainees is burning bright for the Obama administration and the legal community at home and abroad. For some, the question is a simple one: Such techniques as waterboarding constitute torture, which is unambiguously prohibited in black-letter law under the terms of the Convention against Torture, to which the United States is a party, as well as under U.S. criminal law. Such techniques also run afoul of the Geneva Conventions regarding detainee treatment, which likewise binds the United States. These violations demand legal accountability for the perpetrators.

But who are the perpetrators? That's where things get interesting.

CIA operatives and their superiors apparently sought and obtained legal opinions from the Bush administration Justice Department—the so-called "torture memos"—authorizing in highly detailed terms the interrogation techniques the agency was permitted to employ on specific "high-value detainees." The intentions of the Obama administration are still unclear, but initial indications from the administration, including the president himself, are that the CIA interrogators who actually used the harsh methods will not be subject to prosecution. That seems to be because they were relying on the Justice Department's finding that certain harsh techniques (but not all harsh techniques) were within bounds. Even if the Bush administration itself subsequently changed its view on the bounds of the permissible to the point of withdrawing some of its initial legal conclusions on detainee treatment—a repudiation the Obama administration embraces and will likely extend farther—CIA operatives were relying on the guidance from the Justice Department about what was legal, and so should not (by this reasoning) be subject to prosecution according to a standard of legal conduct that was not in place at the time.

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Many observers breathed a sigh of relief after Obama went to Langley and made comments in line with this position. The *Washington Post* columnist David Ignatius, who is well plugged-in to intelligence circles, warned of the debilitating effect on the agency the threat of prosecutions was having: "President Obama promised CIA officers that they won't be prosecuted for carrying out lawful orders, but the people on the firing line don't believe him. They think the memos have opened a new season of investigation and retribution." The willingness of operatives to take risky assignments, and not just with regard to interrogations but in all the legally murky aspects of intelligence and counterterrorism programs, could diminish to levels alarmingly dangerous to the safety of Americans if those doing this hard work cannot be sure that the lines they understand they must not cross won't be moved after the fact. One day you are serving your country by taking action; the next day you are criminally liable for having taken exactly that action. This is no way to run an intelligence service.

To this pragmatic consideration, one might add another: Does the Obama administration really want a war with its intelligence agencies? The amount of political damage intelligence officials can inflict through leaking sensitive information or shading findings in certain ways is vast—as the Bush administration learned the hard way. The Obama administration, which received a warm "not-Bush, not-neocon" welcome from the intelligence community, if not a fonder embrace, would have to be reluctant to jeopardize the good relations.

But what about the torture? Do you really want to let the people doing the actual torturing, if that's what you think they were doing, get away with it? If you are going to make a categorical imperative of opposition to torture, shouldn't everyone involved in the process be subject to accountability for their actions? If waterboarding is obviously torture and could not be mistaken for anything else by any reasonable person, then a piece of paper with a legal argument is hardly going to turn it into something else. If the conscience is shocked, it should stay shocked, no?

Moreover, that argument about how the interrogators were relying on Justice Department guidance is a bit con-

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venient. The CIA has lawyers of its own. What did they think? Were they of the view that waterboarding and other harsh techniques amounted to torture? The Justice Department was responding to requests for legal advice *from the agency*. From the way in which the Justice memos were drafted, the agency's question was not simply, "What the heck should we do with these guys?" Here is how the memo signed by Office of Legal Council head Jay Bybee, now a federal appeals court judge, characterized the circumstances of the CIA's request for guidance in his memo to CIA acting general counsel John Rizzo on interrogating Abu Zubaydah: "In light of the information you believe Zubaydah has and the high level of threat you believe now exists, you wish to move the interrogations into what you have described as an 'increased pressure phase.'"

The CIA was seeking specific authorization of specific techniques it wished to inflict on specific individuals for specific reasons related to the specific information the agency believed they possessed and would not give up easily in the absence of resort to the specified techniques. The picture of a lone interrogator acting alone obscures the bureaucratic apparatus unfolding just outside the "torture chamber" upward through channels straight to the top. The agency was seeking permission for what it wanted to do—or at least that is a plausible hypothesis one ought to investigate, if there is going to be an investigation.

Perhaps, though it's a stretch, we should refrain from inculpating those just doing their jobs in accordance with the legal standards made clear to them at the time. Doing so, however, would entail accepting a version of the "I was just following orders" defense. We have a record of taking a dim view of that defense; it wouldn't work for you if you were a trigger man at Srebrenica or the gas master at Treblinka. In any case, the whole point of relative lenity for those at the bottom is that you are most concerned to come down as hard as possible on those higher up, the ones giving the orders and making the policy. The Justice Department didn't *order* the agency to undertake interrogations in a particular way. It ruled on the permissibility of the requested techniques. Who gave what orders remains a mystery.

I have no doubt that some of those who have denounced these techniques as torture in clear violation of American and international law would be willing to prosecute all the way up and down the line, from President Bush to the director of central intelligence to (and here I have no specific knowledge of the structure, relationship, or precise names of the offices involved) the head of the operations branch to the director of the interrogations section to the desk officer for high-value detainees to the waterboarders themselves. Yet that is not the principle that seems to be emerging. The legal action, as we all know, centers on the Bush administration lawyers who drafted the "torture memos" and the senior administration officials who urged them on or supported their point of view to the hilt within the administration (and against countervailing internal views, including some coming from among Bush political appointees).

It's John Yoo and Jay Bybee, then of the Office of Legal Counsel, and David Addington, then counsel in the office of the vice president, who are in the legal crosshairs. They are the ones whose prosecution is ardently sought by foreign legal scholars and magistrates. They are the ones some Democrats in Congress have demanded that an independent counsel be appointed to investigate. They are the ones the U.N. special rapporteur on torture has singled out for their "complicity" (though he'd like to see the CIA operatives on trial as well). They are the ones whom Barack Obama rather pointedly indicated were not off the hook shortly after he said the CIA operatives were. Yoo and Bybee were the main subjects of a five-year investigation by the Justice Department's Office of Professional Responsibility, as we learned this week, and were reportedly recommended for disciplinary proceedings before state bar associations.

And this is, in its way, very instructive. One must ask: What is the crime here? People say the crime is torture, but it seems doubtful anyone will be tried and punished for the perpetration of physical acts upon the bodies and psyches of detainees: no charges of torture proper under Sec. 2340 of the U.S. Code, no charges of assault and aggravated battery or misuse of authority under color of law. And if there are charges of *conspiracy* to commit torture in violation of U.S. and international law, the co-conspirators who actually engaged in the activity that supposedly counts as the underlying crime will likely remain unindicted.

Which, I think, gives rise to the conclusion that the crime is not "torture" at all. Rather, the crime is reaching the *legal conclusion* that the interrogation techniques at issue in the "torture memos" are something *other than* torture and thus permissible. Reaching such a conclusion is, or should be, in this view, an illegal act.

So we are not really talking about enforcement of a prohibition on certain physical acts' being used against captives, but rather enforcement of a mandatory view among government officials that it is wrong to perform such acts. Those who are especially at risk of prosecution for this crime are those who presumably ought best to know better than to reach the wrong legal conclusion: the lawyers.

With apologies to Michel Foucault, we thus have a new system of surveillance of government lawyers, including through the public release of documents ordinarily shielded from disclosure and written in the expectation that they will remain secret. The system will threaten

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to punish those who deviate from accepted norms about certain matters of law. Thereby, it will instill a disciplinary structure in which government lawyers conform their opinions to the norm. No government lawyer can draft guidance in the expectation that its secrecy will be preserved. Every government lawyer will fear legal consequences for deviation. Accordingly, the lawyers will take it upon themselves to reach acceptable conclusions in the knowledge that they are being watched.

It should be necessary to prosecute only once in order to establish the robust and self-sustaining disciplinary structure described here. One could argue that it is not necessary at all, that the public opprobrium directed from the legal community writ large toward the Bush lawyers is punishment enough. But such an impulse of mercy is unlikely to overcome the urge to punish those who reached the conclusion that there are circumstances in which a state may lawfully undertake the methods described in the torture memos. Their crime is not so much that they have themselves broken the law or a provision of a treaty, but that they, agents of a state that must be bound by international law, have sought to aggressively defend a maximal interpretation of their government's room for maneuver under that law. Even more, they have sought to impose the right of their government to declare for its own benefit a lawful exception to that law.

There may be exceptional circumstances, but they are precisely not lawful. To put it another way, would the French government's detention and interrogation tactics in all instances pass muster according to the standards being applied to techniques described in the torture memos? One may be permitted one's doubts. Germany recently got a pass on condoning torture from the European Court on Human Rights, as John Rosenthal has written in *Policy Review*, even though the German judicial system gave a mere slap on the wrist to a policeman who used techniques harsher than any employed at Guantánamo to rough up a kidnapper he hoped would talk in time to save the life of the child-victim (the boy was found dead). One does what one has to: The point is that France and Germany agree that torture is illegal. They are in good standing on international law and its underlying norms, because they profess adherence. The hands of their government lawyers are clean, if not in all cases the hands of their interrogators.

The United States, on the other hand, has a terrible problem with the idea of an exception: that one may and perhaps must break the law in extreme circumstances. The U.S. government would rather make even a dubious argument that its conduct is lawful. The problem is that such arguments take the form of a generalization: In circumstance A, it is lawful to do X. Such generalizations invariably sound like a routinization of the exceptional circumstances, a condition of permanent exception that is always available to trump the prohibition to which X may run counter. We got into the same sort of trouble with Bush's 2002 *National Security Strategy of the United States*: Its response to our highly particular problem with Iraq was to articulate general principles in accord with which the United States might wage preemptive (actually preventive) war—thus creating the impression that we now had a policy of preventive war and the intention to wage many such wars.

The U.N. special rapporteur said, and he is hardly alone, that "every reasonable person would know that waterboarding, for instance, is torture." I wonder if, by this standard, at the trial of John Yoo or Jay Bybee, a defense lawyer would be permitted to make the argument that whether waterboarding is torture is something about which reasonable people differed. As officers of the court and members of the bar, perhaps the defense lawyers, as well, should face sanction if they fail to uphold a viewpoint on which "every reasonable person" would agree. Perhaps the only real defense they would be able to muster for their clients is insanity—the madness we detect when persons unreasonably disagree with what "every reasonable person would know."

I think Yoo and Bybee made mistakes, to which Addington contributed. They had an overweening view of the scope of executive power in general and the president's commander-in-chief power in particular. The Bush administration's original sin, as I wrote in these pages in February 2002, was its failure to get the initial terms of detainee treatment at Guantánamo straight and to make public their reasoning. That, in itself, would have cost nothing and might have prevented much error and trouble.

In the case of Khalid Sheikh Mohammed and Abu Zubaydah, the stakes were higher. The stress of the times was extreme. Lately, in defense of the tactics of that time, or perhaps in acknowledgment that such techniques are no longer warranted, former Bush administration officials have been arguing that we knew helplessly little about al Qaeda and needed to grasp as quickly as possible the nature of the threat we faced. This is no longer the case. Our knowledge is much improved—perhaps in part thanks to the information obtained through harsh interrogation techniques, whether or not such information might have been obtained through other, milder, means.

The circumstances, in short, were exceptional. We did what we did, and the whole world now knows it. The object of disapproval, for those who disapprove, is less what we did—otherwise the call for heads would include those who actually committed the acts—than the government lawyers' effort to find or create a legal framework for the exceptional circumstances. They undertook this effort in good faith. It may have been a blunder, but it was no crime. ♦

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S.Y. Agnon, 1966

DAVID RUBINGER / CORBIS

Come to Life

The Hebrew revival in modern literature

BY BENJAMIN BALINT

The contemporary Israeli novelist Amos Oz likes to say that, as a boy in Jerusalem, he noticed that everyone over 45 spoke in another language, and so he feared that when he would grow up and turn 45, he himself would start speaking Yiddish just as surely as his hair would go gray.

Before the year 1900 or so, no modern Jewish community spoke Hebrew; the language slept in hibernation. The Bible itself had to be translated into languages that Jews spoke: Aramaic (the Targum), Greek (the Septuagint), and Yiddish.

Modern Hebrew writers, then, had to refashion a 3,000-year-old sacred language—a language without a vernacular—into a lithe idiom. They had to stretch a traditional language until it became supple enough to seize a world that had moved beyond tradition. These writers sought, as the critic Robert Alter has said,

> to achieve in Hebrew what Gogol and Turgenev had achieved in Russian, Balzac in French, Scott and Dickens in English; and how was one to do this in a language nobody spoke . . . in which there was no word for 'potato'?

The dreamers who wrought this miracle were ex-yeshiva students who left the confines of the *shtetl* for vibrant cultural centers like Odessa, Warsaw, Vilna, Königsberg, and Berlin, and then for Palestine. Bonded by a fierce (and quixotic) commitment to Hebrew as the language of national renewal, they succeeded in coaxing this ancient language to act as the vehicle by which the Jewish past was brought to bear on the present. And they gave it a vitality the likes of which had not been seen since the poets of the Hebrew Renaissance in medieval Spain.

Hebrew Writers on Writing
Edited by Peter Cole
Trinity University, 320 pp., $45

This invaluable new anthology, *Hebrew Writers on Writing*, takes this episode in literary history as its subject. Editor Peter Cole, a poet, translator, and publisher who lives in Jerusalem, introduces modern Hebrew writers by way of collecting their comments on craft, and their reflections on Hebrew's distinguishing virtues. Cole deftly draws excerpts from about 50 writers—letters, notebooks, diaries, essays, poems, interviews, memoirs, and aphorisms, many of which appear here in English for the

Benjamin Balint, who lives in Jerusalem, is the Herman Kahn fellow at the Hudson Institute.

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first time. And he supplies judicious biographical introductions to each.

Cole arranges this collection more or less chronologically, from the 19th century to the present day, but as he explains in his preface, he does not intend to make Hebrew literature stand for an official portrait. He leaves out many worthy writers (Ahad Ha'am, Y.L. Peretz, M.Y. Berdichevski, Haim Hazaz, and M.Z. Feierberg). But Cole's portrait, if not comprehensive, is well-proportioned.

His brush falls first on the pioneering generation—men like Haim Nahman Bialik and Saul Tchernichowsky who essentially belonged to the 19th century. He then sketches in the second, "Palestinian," generation, which sought to emulate the European modernists—writers like Uri Zvi Greenberg, Natan Alterman, Avraham Shlonsky, and Yonatan Ratosh, who were born around the turn of the century. Finally, he turns to the "Israeli" generation—writers like A.B. Yehoshua, Amos Oz, and David Grossman—who were born into Hebrew, and who completed the alchemy by which the affected turgidity of the pioneers was turned into a colloquial naturalness.

The first virtue of this book is that it lets Hebrew writers speak for themselves, for they discuss their art artfully. Some depict the entanglements and responsibilities of writing in a land where politics and poetics intersect with unusual intensity. Speaking once to a group of American students, the Tel Aviv poet Meir Wieseltier was asked why he wrote about politics in his poems: "That's like asking a Greek poet who lives on an island why he writes about the wind," he replied.

Others talk about their craft by addressing the matter of literary influence, not all of which streamed from Hebraic sources. Some Hebrew poets, like Tchernichowsky, joined Hebraic with Hellenic, and brought Greek meters into Hebrew verse. Others looked toward modernists writing in English.

But as Cole's album shows, most of these writers reserved their deepest reverence for their Hebrew predecessors. Yaakov Fichman remarks here on how Hasidism's spirit of renewal dug channels through which Hebrew's "hidden vitality" could course once more. S.Y. Agnon, the greatest writer of Hebrew fiction, in his 1966 Nobel address included here, acknowledges with pleasure his profound debt to the Bible, Mishna, Talmud, and Midrash. And Amos Oz tells of taking pleasure from the "juicy ripples of Hasidic tales" that undulate through Agnon's fiction.

Many of the writers here, in fact, attest to the uniqueness of Hebrew. The ardent secularist Y.H. Brenner, murdered in the Arab riots of 1921, suggests that only Hebrew captures the divine spark. "We write in Hebrew," he declares, "because we must, because the divine spark within us emerges only within that flame." "To write, but not in Hebrew," the poet and translator Lea Goldberg adds, "for me, that would be the same as not writing at all." "Writing in Hebrew," the Levantine writer Shulamit Hareven remarks, "means first and foremost that the writer is using tools—words, structures, and norms—that have been in existence for between four and five thousand years."

The reason for this devotion has much to do with the keen ways Hebrew writers sensed—and sometimes feared—the power of the ancient language they belatedly employed. For its modern practitioners, Hebrew encodes knowledge, but it also hides immense religious power. It is the primal language of eternal truths, the sublime tongue by which the world was created and in which the voice of the Lord was heard.

Gershom Scholem, the great scholar of Kabbalah, warns here of Hebrew's latent redemptive force, "its apocalyptic sting." Hebrew is "pregnant with catastrophe," he writes. The lyric poet Bialik points out the ways language contains that catastrophe by acting as concealment, as a barrier fashioned of "words, crowded and consecutive like the links in a suit of armor."

Several of the writers assembled here—Abraham Isaac Kook, Israel's first chief rabbi, the maverick poet Zelda, and Agnon, for example—remained pious Jews. The great majority, however, did not. Which brings us to the second of this volume's virtues: It lays bare modern Hebrew writing not only as a literature of awakening and of salvation—individual and national—but of revolt.

The revivers of Hebrew revolted, first, against those who thought it disgraceful to try to summon a dead language, let alone to untame it once summoned. The masters of the Hebrew renaissance revolted, too, against Hebrew's sacred past; they sought to rid the language of the disfigurements of religious orthodoxy—to make the sacred profane. Although critical of the impulse toward assimilation, they insisted that Hebrew literature, like Zionism itself, must free the Jew. As they inched toward Jewish cultural confidence, they yoked the revival of Hebrew letters together with the modernizing movement known as the Haskala.

Still other writers, who thought of themselves as "new Hebrews," revolted against Judaism itself. Disdaining the Diaspora, they sought to emancipate Hebrew literature from a Jewish literature they regarded as stuck in the narrow byways of provincial ethnicity. Preeminent among them was Yonatan Ratosh, leader of the so-called Canaanite school, who ruthlessly wished to sever Hebrew from Jewishness.

Taken together, as Cole's group portrait illustrates to brilliant effect, these writers of revolt didn't create a literature *ex nihilo*. The language held too many associations and allusions for that. They could not help mining Hebrew's rich repository of cultural meanings, preserved in its many linguistic layers.

But if resurrection is not creation from nothing, it is nearly as wondrous. In animating a language unspoken for generations—"a tongue that has no great-great-grandfathers," the poet Avraham Shlonsky said—and in teaching the "holy tongue" to speak in modern accents, modern Hebrew writers became ventriloquists; only their dummy was the language itself. Without their power to breathe life into a dormant language, Hebrew would have remained mute. Instead, it speaks today in all the resonances and registers of an old-new language. ♦

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Brussels Sprout

Would Tintin appeal to American taste?

BY MICHAEL TAUBE

On January 10, 1929, Belgium's *Le Petit Vingtième*, a weekly children's newspaper supplement to *Le Vingtième Siècle*, introduced the world to a new cartoon hero, Tintin.

Tintin was created by the supplement's talented editor in chief, Georges Prosper Remi, better known by his pen name, Hergé. His protagonist was depicted as an intrepid young reporter with a love for adventure, mystery, and intrigue. Tintin's constant companion was his faithful dog, Snowy, and he was later joined by a memorable cast of characters: the crusty sea dog Captain Archibald Haddock, brilliant eccentric Professor Cuthbert Calculus, and the mirror-image (albeit unrelated) detectives Thomson and Thompson.

Tintin turns 80 this year—and still doesn't look a day over 17. Hergé died in 1983 but left behind 24 Tintin books—which have sold over 230 million copies in more than 80 languages. There have been animated films, live-action features, documentaries, biographies, and BBC Radio dramatizations—not to mention Frederic Tuten's superb novel, *Tintin in the New World*. And a new movie, *The Adventures of Tintin: Secret of the Unicorn*, coproduced by Steven Spielberg, is slated to be released in 2011.

Now, at last, a collector's edition can be added to the list. Little, Brown has unveiled an attractive, eight-volume set of hardcover books—rather than the traditional, oversized soft-cover comic strip albums—that could easily be displayed in a personal library. Sadly, it cannot truly be called a definitive collection. Three Tintin books aren't included: *Tintin in the Land of the Soviets* (the first tale), *Tintin in the Congo* (the second tale, which was removed from the gift set by pressure because of its less than salient depiction of Africans), and *Tintin and Alph-Art* (Hergé's last and unfinished work).

The Adventures of Tintin
Collector's Gift Set
by Hergé
Little, Brown, $150

Yet the remaining 21 stories, plus a detailed stand-alone volume by the famed British Tintinologist Michael Farr, entitled *Tintin & Co.*, are a joy to read.

For some Americans, this may be their first exposure to Tintin. At least, that's what the *Economist* noted recently. But probity cannot explain why Tintin became a cultural landmark in Europe, as important on his side of the Atlantic as Superman on the other. For, despite his qualities, Tintin has never been a big hit in the Anglo-Saxon world.

In Britain, he is reasonably well known, but as a minority taste, bound within narrow striations of class: His albums are bought to be tucked into boarding school trunks or read after Saturday morning violin lessons. In America, Tintin is barely known, which is unfortunate, since Hergé's third book was *Tintin in America*.

Now to be fair, Tintin was a fixture in parts of the Anglo-Saxon world. I live in Canada, I first read the comic strip in my public library, and I played the piano. Even so, Tintin's massive European popularity has, like *The Adventures of Asterix*, *Rupert Bear*, *Beano*, and *Oor Wullie*, still not made its way across the pond. Maybe that's not a bad thing; if nothing else, American readers will be able to start fresh and ignore off-the-wall rumors about the strip, such as Tintin being gay.

Matthew Parris, a homosexual and columnist (and former British Tory MP) for the *Times*, seems to think so, anyway. In a recent column he produced some pseudo-evidence for the prosecution:

> A callow, androgynous blonde-quiffed youth in funny trousers and a scarf moving into the country mansion of his best friend, a middle-aged sailor? A sweet-faced lad devoted to a fluffy white toy terrier, whose other closest pals are an inseparable couple of detectives in bowler hats, and whose only serious female friend is an opera diva. . . . And you're telling me Tintin isn't gay?

And if you are wondering why Tintin has barely aged, Parris chalks that up to the fact he was "probably moisturizing."

Tintin and Snowy

NEWSCOM

But seriously, it's hard not to become completely enthralled when reading Tintin's fast-paced adventures. The storylines are intriguing, and Hergé's artwork is stunning: It's among some of the finest ever produced for

Michael Taube is a political commentator and former speechwriter for Canadian prime minister Stephen Harper.

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children's animation. The panels are full of bright colors, highly detailed landscapes, and majestic buildings, which allows the strip to take on a unique, lifelike quality.

One notable example is an extended scene in *The Broken Ear* in which Tintin saves Snowy from a watery grave. Hergé's artistic talents come face-to-face with the fierce reality of the fictional Arumbaya River in South America—and the final product is a stunning image that harks back to classic comic strips like *Little Nemo in Slumberland* or *The Yellow Kid*.

Meanwhile, the memorable cast of characters continually plays off Tintin's heroic energy in a near symphonic manner. Farr accurately portrays Captain Haddock as "the exact opposite of Tintin: weak where Tintin was resolute, unreliable instead of dependable, choleric rather than calm." Meanwhile, Professor Calculus fills the role of "an eccentric, absent-minded professor type," complete with regular bouts of deafness and the heart of a hopeless romantic. Even Snowy is recognized as being more than a mere dog, but rather a "canine hero capable of seizing the initiative" to help Tintin survive the twists and turns he always seems to face.

There's also a similar formula in Tintin which was employed in classic Warner Brothers cartoons: The final product was made for children, but with adults in mind. This is especially true in terms of the link between Tintin's adventures and actual historical events. Students of history will appreciate the surprising bits of reality that Hergé regularly tossed in. For instance, *Tintin in America* led the intrepid reporter to an encounter with Al Capone. *Destination Moon* and *Explorers on the Moon* enabled Tintin to beat Neil Armstrong by 15 years in the race for space. Even *Tintin in Tibet* contains references to political and social themes that can still be seen in print today.

The most profound influence on Hergé's work, however, was his friendship in Brussels with fellow art student Chang Chong-chen. He would be the inspiration for Tintin's friend Chang, a popular character in *The Blue Lotus* and *Cigars of the Pharaoh*. Farr notes that the friendship created a mutual period of discovery for both men: "Just as Chang remained a Westernized Chinese artist from his Brussels student days, so Hergé was profoundly orientalized by their encounter and drawn to Chinese philosophy and ideas."

Finally, a light political undercurrent in some books should please conservatives and libertarians. As noted by Harry Thompson in *Tintin: Hergé and His Creation* (1991), "Hergé's own beliefs leaned to the right," but "only in that it seemed more logical and functional to him to improve existing conditions by making them succeed on their own terms."

Tintin perfectly fits this bill: He constantly desires to right a perceived wrong, to help his friends at all costs, and to shift the equilibrium back to its natural order. If a treasure is stolen, a mystery is unsolved, or a criminal is on the loose, Tintin and his friends will be there to fix the problem, improve the situation, and ultimately win the day.

Tintin is one of the giants of European comics. Few comic strips have ever had its brilliant style, wit, personalities, and artistic merits. If *The Adventures of Tintin* can become the next big thing in America—held in the same breath as Superman, Bugs Bunny, and the whole Peanuts gang—there may be no stopping this juggernaut. ♦

'Elements' at 50

It's an etiquette book, not a collection of inflexible rules.

BY ANDREW FERGUSON

William Strunk and E.B. White's *Elements of Style* turned 50 last month, and the most interesting thing about the anniversary, which came and went with a smattering of notices and a chinpull here and there, was what it revealed about the book's reputation. Half a century into its reign as the world's most popular grammar book, *Elements* is getting mixed reviews.

Maybe "World's Most Popular Grammar Book" sounds like a middling honor, like "World's Handsomest Hockey Player." But since its publication in 1959 *Elements* has sold nearly 10 million copies, which is pretty impressive indeed, even if several million of those were bought by college freshmen under compulsion. On the evidence the book remains a great sentimental favorite with the language-loving laity. Among those who examine words for a living, however—the clerics of the language game, the linguists and grammarians—the book is in bad odor. Some of them even consider it an active hindrance to knowledge, for the same reason a real-estate mogul would disdain "Monopoly" or professional hitmen take offense at the *Godfather* movies: It may look fun, but it gives everybody the wrong idea.

"50 Years of Stupid Grammar Advice" was the headline in the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, over a bilious essay by Geoffrey K. Pullum, a party-pooping linguist at the University of Edinburgh and, perhaps not coincidentally, the coauthor of the *Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*, which has not sold 10 million copies. The *New York Times* followed Pullum's article a few days later with a survey of language experts, posted on one of the 46,379 blogs the newspaper includes in its web-

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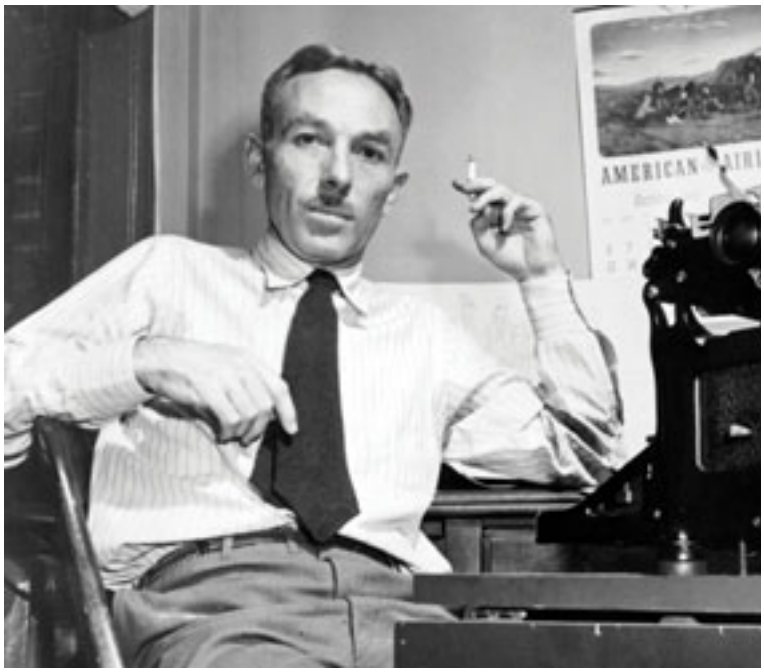
site. The experts were unanimous in their disdain. The titles they assigned to their little squibs gives the flavor: "A Disservice to All," "We've Moved On," "I'm Moving On," and "Rules Are Meant to be Broken."

Strunk and White, Pullum noted in the *Chronicle*, "won't be hurt by these critical remarks. They are long dead." And lucky for them. Pullum wasted no time in hoisting their poor limp carcasses to the stocks and pelting them with old pieces of fruit. Both Strunk, who wrote the first edition of the book in 1918, and White, who revised it into the form we know today, were "grammatical incompetents," Pullum wrote. While a good writer otherwise—author, after all, of *Charlotte's Web*, *Stuart Little*, and many lovely essays—White had even less "analytical understanding of syntax" than his coauthor. Their "sheer ignorance," moreover, is compounded by their "bossiness." It's one of Pullum's favorite imprecations, *bossiness*. And bossiness is at the root of his hostility.

He appears to score early, when he disputes Strunk and White's Rule 10: "Use the active voice." Pullum casts the rule in the negative—Don't use the passive voice—and rebuts it by noting that the passive voice can be quite useful and natural-sounding. He points out that the authors offer four examples of the kinds of sentences you should avoid: For example, "There were a great number of dead leaves lying on the ground." But most of Strunk and White's examples (including that one) aren't in the passive voice at all! "The bias against the passive," writes a horrified Pullum, "is being retailed by a pair of authors so grammatically clueless that they don't know what is a passive construction and what isn't."

It looks like a pretty good gotcha, and it would be proof of cluelessness—if true. But when you glance through Rule 10 you quickly see that Pullum has misread the section. Strunk and White clearly don't intend their four examples to illustrate the passive voice. They're meant instead to be instances of the kind of limp writing that the active voice can invigorate. If you scrub a sentence of "perfunctory expressions" like *there is* and reorganize it around a transitive verb, good things happen: "There were a great number of dead leaves lying on the ground" becomes the much more efficient and immediate "Dead leaves covered the ground." And even then Strunk and White go out of their way to say Rule 10 doesn't forbid the passive voice. The passive voice, they say, is often handy and frequently unavoidable, as Pullum himself says in blaming them for saying what they don't say.



E. B. White, 1948

BETTMANN / CORBIS

Most people who poke around in *The Elements of Style* learn soon enough that the point of its rules isn't the enforcement of grammatical punctilios. In the authors' hands a rule serves as a marker, a reminder of how to make your sentences and paragraphs more appealing and understandable, in deference to the reader. And that's the way it is throughout the book. The critics find the rules antiquated, unnecessary, or an impediment to free expression—but mostly distasteful because bossy.

One grammarian disputes their insistence on the "serial comma" (the comma inserted after the next-to-last term in a series—*red, white, and blue* rather than *red, white and blue*.) Strunk and White say you shouldn't start a sentence with "However" to mean "Nevertheless" or "But," a prohibition that Pullum finds particularly infuriating. And he really blows his stack over the distinction they draw between "that" and "which"—*that* introduces a restrictive clause, *which* a nonrestrictive. This, he says, is merely a "copyeditor's old bugaboo" that contradicts centuries of English usage and has, worse, injected crippling language neuroses into a "nation of educated people" who are left "anxious and insecure" as a result.

We should be so lucky! If this nation of educated people were suddenly crippled with insecurity about how they use words, entire newsmagazines would collapse, cable TV studios would fall dark, and the great billowing blogosphere would deflate to a hundredth of its present size and we'd all be much happier. Besides, Strunk and White's crotchets, if that's what they are, aren't merely arbitrary. They share a common purpose—and a moral purpose at that. A paragraph that respects the distinction between *that* and *which* goes down much more smoothly than one in which pronouns are used interchangeably. Misusing *However* for *Nevertheless* at the start of a sentence is liable to wrong-foot a reader and draw him up short: He can't be sure, till he's

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knee-deep in the sentence, whether the word means "But" or "In whatever way . . ." (*However you may interpret the rules of syntax, this is a good one to follow* rather than *However, you may interpret the rules of syntax as you see fit*.)

As for the serial comma, without it a reader might again lose his footing: *His favorite breakfast foods were fluffy pancakes, Jimmy Dean sausage and ham and eggs*. Did Jimmy Dean make the ham, too? A serial comma would put the confusion to rest: *His favorite breakfast foods were fluffy pancakes, Jimmy Dean sausage and ham, and eggs*.

Strunk and White want to persuade word-slingers—that's all of us, at one time or another—that a smooth piece of writing, or rather a smooth piece of reading, is made from dozens of such seemingly picky considerations. Always their motivation is fellow feeling: "The reader," White wrote, "[is] in serious trouble most of the time, floundering in a swamp, and . . . it [is] the duty of anyone attempting to write English to drain this swamp quickly and get the reader up on dry ground." Making rules, assembling hints, placing markers, is one way to drive the point home to the writer who, in asking to be read, has dared to put his reader in such a pickle.

This isn't "bossiness." It's not even grammar, really: It's etiquette, and etiquette, properly understood, is a branch of morality. Pullum and many of his fellow critics suffer from a double-bind common to a relativistic age. They refuse to tolerate a person who they think might be intolerant; it is their judgment that judgmentalism should be condemned. But in their unbudgeable disdain for other people's certainty, they're just as bossy as they believe Strunk and White to be.

Everybody draws a line here or there, makes distinctions between good and bad, rules one thing or another in or out of court. Only recently has it been thought polite for people to pretend they don't do this. It's astonishing, when you think about it, that *The Elements of Style* has survived so long, making distinctions, mounting defenses, and daring to say what's good for us. ♦

NEWSCOM

A Chimp's Story

The ape between Tarzan and Jane.

BY ZACHARY MUNSON

Johnny Weissmuller and the author in New York, 1942

Every once in a long, long while a book comes along so large, so grand, that it defies all pedestrian attempts at classification, and yet bears significantly on our lives, as men, women, Americans—as human beings. Yes, once every so often we are blessed with such a book to enliven our sluggish dreams and stimulate our decrepit limbs to march on, a little lighter, a little happier, through this alternately grim and magical trek we call life.

Me Cheeta
My Life in Hollywood
by Cheeta
Ecco, 336 pp., $24.99

It is safe to say that *Me Cheeta: My Life in Hollywood*, a new memoir from Cheeta the chimpanzee, is most assuredly not that book.

Zachary Munson is a writer in Washington.

It is hard to dispute that Cheeta, former costar in the old Tarzan movies and the oldest living chimp in captivity, has an impressive CV: actor, "artist," writer, blah blah blah. Yes, Cheeta, you are indeed a chimp of all trades: cad, narcissist, pretentious bore, shameless gossip, jealous mediocrity. Oh, and *name-dropper*: How many orgies *did* you attend with Paul Henreid and Hedy Lamarr? But I'm getting ahead of myself.

Like many a memoir, Cheeta's auto-hagiography treats us to a cloying portrayal of the author's childhood. Here's a vivid description of African jungle life:

> Mama would take us across the stream to fish for termites. [My sis-

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> ter] Victoria would ride on [Mama's] back and I would cling underneath. The water was cold and flowing and pressed against me when we crossed, but I always felt safe.

And there's a stirring rendition of ritual rain dances:

> From across the forest you'd hear the low coughs given out by the other tree climbers. No birds, no insects. Only our low, muffled coughs, echoless in the wet air.

The opening chapters are fully encrusted in such mundane saccharine. Could anything be more canned, more trite, more facile, more . . . *simian*?

Oh, and the writing. Now, I freely admit the writing is far better than what you might expect from a chimpanzee, let alone an actor. But Cheeta goes to great pains (and inflicts the same on the reader) to describe everything as a chimp would see it, mystified by the most basic human stuff—ships, buildings, a game of poker:

> The humans sat around displaying fans, like male turacos in courtship, made up of pretty colored cards. The longest display, again like turacos, was rewarded with chips.

He eventually discards this excruciating device because, as he himself says in frustration, "this is gonna take forever." Even with that artifice removed there is still something so affected about it. What are we to make of this African chimp raised in Los Angeles when he's attacking the man he believes to be his great comic rival?

> That's the tragedy at the heart of . . . my comedy, and a little more profound than anything in my esteemed colleague the Utopian dolt, satyromaniac . . . sentimentalist Charlie Chaplin's Weltanschauung, to use a term rather typical of Charlie's own self-consciously showy autodidact's vocabulary.

Ahem . . . pot paging kettle. And this is to say nothing of the jarringly pretentious babble he inflicts upon the reader when discussing *himself*. On acting: "I think most serious actors will tell you they learned nine-tenths of their craft from life and stole the other tenth." On fame:

> If you want to know what being famous feels like, what it means . . . then picture a human and a chimpanzee facing each other in awkward silence, with nothing to be said, the faint inanity of the interaction stealing over both of them. That's what fame is.

As the inanity of this statement steals over the reader, Cheeta does not hesitate to inform us that he is speaking as "perhaps the most famous animal alive today." And, we can only assume, the most modest as well. He informs us that a trying upbringing is "the thread that links Van Gogh, Dickens, Herman Melville, Hitchcock, Frank McCourt, Dave Pelzer, Kirk Douglas, Margaret Seltzer and me." And he suggests that we leave the question of "*Tarzan and his Mate*'s precise place in the Top Ten Greatest movies of all time" to other, less sophisticated individuals. After all, "comparisons are odious, anyway, in art."

Cheeta's preening self-importance knows no bounds. And yet, for such a great chimp, such a sensitive artist and deep thinker, this book is remarkably thin. Not short, mind you; it is utterly, interminably, and insufferably long. But once out of the jungle all you'll find (snaking between Cheeta's various descriptions of his own greatness) is tawdry and obscene Hollywood gossip.

Yes, Cheeta has known them all (some, he claims, biblically): Clark Gable, Douglas Fairbanks, Marlene Dietrich, Gary Cooper, Cary Grant, Carole Lombard. One minute he's crashing Fairbanks's prized Rolls-Royce into a wall, with a lion, two midgets, and a drunken David Niven in tow; the next he's downing Brandy Alexanders with John Barrymore while witnessing a lesbian tryst between Marlene Dietrich and Mercedes de Acosta (whoever she might be).

His venomous jealousy is brought to bear against anyone he perceives to have slighted him: Maureen O'Sullivan, who robbed him of screen time; Mickey Rooney, who was better loved; Chaplin, who was simply better. He goes on at great length, and (actually) with great admiration, about Johnny Weissmuller. And yet, he can't resist revealing with unsettling giddiness, the sordid and grisly details of Weissmuller's many marriages.

Me Cheeta reads like a simian Louella Parsons, an anthropoid Hedda Hopper. And like those two, Cheeta is of a different era, and he can't help but date himself. I mean, Constance Bennett? Nigel Bruce? His star registry begins to read less like Who's Who and more like Who Cares?

And who does care anymore? For like all "dreamers" (Cheeta's preferred designation for movie actors), one is eventually forced to wake up. Cheeta's decline is a well-worn tale. He goes unemployed for a long stretch. He finally lands a job, and gets fired almost immediately for being too old and too drunk. He ends up performing at zoos and parks with a Weissmuller knockoff named "Tarzo." He tries to put a smile on things, to coat his disappointing, forced retirement in cheer.

Today he helps protect movie animals from cruelty. And he paints. Hooray. But it's a bit sad. The truth is that Cheeta was forced from the spotlight long ago, and he never inhabited it as fully as he imagines. In fact, it is hard to imagine why anyone would even read this "tell-all." When was the last time you asked yourself: Gee, I wonder whatever happened to that monkey from those Depression-era Tarzan movies? When was the last time you wondered what happened to Tarzan himself?

If the answer is anything other than never, then perhaps you will enjoy *Me Cheeta*. If not, stay away. From its pompous introduction to its dreary conclusion, to all the outlandish and crass self-mythologizing in-between, *Me Cheeta* is a history absolutely worthy of its grinning, babbling, backflipping, narcissist of a subject.

P.S. Please disregard this entire review since *Me Cheeta* is a work of fiction written by someone with entirely too much time on his hands. ♦

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Green Hornet

The evolution of a West German radical.

BY KAREN DONFRIED

Daniel Cohn-Bendit (middle), Joschka Fischer (right), 1985

REGIS BOSSU / SYGMA / CORBIS

Josef "Joschka" Fischer is an enigma. Few people evoke such strikingly different reactions. For some Germans, Fischer will always be the militant radical identified with the violent protests of the 1960s and '70s, clad in black leather and beating up a police officer. For others he is, first and foremost, the internationally respected and dapper former foreign minister, his countercultural past belied by three-piece suits and bifocals.

Joschka Fischer and the Making of the Berlin Republic
An Alternative History of Postwar Germany
by Paul Hockenos
Oxford, 400 pp., $35

For Paul Hockenos, Fischer is Germany's prodigal son, the youth who went astray, but learned from the experience and returned a better and wiser man. By 2005, when one survey asked what living figure best "represents" Germany, Joschka Fischer came in second, behind only former Chancellor Helmut Schmidt.

Fischer's remarkable personal transformation offers an instructive metaphor for Germany's own postwar metamorphosis. As Hockenos makes clear in this readable and engaging volume, Fischer's story is both a product of Germany's complicated and painful postwar history—starting with his family's expulsion from Hungary at the end of World War II because they were ethnic Germans, resulting in Fischer's birth in West Germany in 1948—and a contributor to that history. (Most dramatically, his service as a united Germany's first and, thus far only, Green foreign minister.)

A rags-to-riches story more compelling than any Horatio Alger ever wrote, Fischer's life is indeed a quintessentially *American* story. For Germans, Fischer's experience is an exceptional one, and his ability to transcend social standing, class, ethnicity, and education is a testament to his own drive and to how much West Germany itself changed in the postwar period.

Fischer's life proves to be an ideal prism through which to explore the trajectory of West Germany's postwar evolution and transformation into a *united* Germany as the ultimate symbol of the Cold War's end. Fischer's protests against the system were emblematic of those of a disenchanted postwar generation that had internalized the lessons of Germany's Nazi past and sought to ensure a democratic future for their country.

Hockenos succeeds here in writing the story not only of Fischer, but also of the diverse protest movements and grassroots campaigns, born of Fischer's generation, that shaped post-1945 Germany. He writes compellingly about these civic initiatives and political movements:

> In different ways, these initially unwelcome forces pushed the postwar republic to deepen, widen, and entrench democracy; they insisted that modern Germany become an active, pluralist civil society the likes of which Germany had never known before.

One irony of Fischer's fascinating evolution is that he sets out wanting to undermine the postwar governing institutions in West Germany and ends up coming to terms with that system and, ultimately, reforming it from within.

Fischer's relationship to the use of force proves to be an enduring theme of his political life. His early commitment to nonviolent protest gave way to the belief that a strategic use of violence was necessary for the success of the protest movement. In the late 1960s and early '70s Fischer became a leading

Karen Donfried, executive vice president of the German Marshall Fund, handled the Europe portfolio on the State Department's Policy Planning Staff during 2003-05.

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figure in "Revolutionary Struggle," a radical left group known to use violent tactics; and while Hockenos argues that Fischer didn't distance himself soon enough from the terrorism of the Baader-Meinhof gang, his experiences in the militant left protest movement led him to renounce violence.

In May 1976 Fischer addressed a crowd of 10,000 that had gathered in Frankfurt for a conference on political repression. This "Römerberg address" would become one of his most important and passionate. For the first time, he publicly criticized the terrorists and urged them "to put down bombs and pick up stones again." Thereafter, Fischer largely withdrew from political activism and, in Hockenos's words, embarked upon a process of "soul-searching" that "would last six long years."

Fischer would have seemed a natural recruit for the Greens when they emerged as a new political party in 1977-78, but he was uninterested. He viewed a party focused on ecology, nonviolence, grassroots democracy, and social justice as a passing trend. It would take the nuclear accident at Three Mile Island in March 1979, the Soviet army's invasion of Afghanistan and NATO's decision to deploy new midrange U.S. missiles in Europe in December 1979, and finally the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, to lead Fischer to join the party in the summer of 1981.

From the start, he identified with the *realpolitik* faction of the Greens, agreeing that forming ruling coalitions with the center-left Social Democrats would be the best way to bring about concrete policy changes. In contrast, the fundamentalists, or "Fundis," saw the Greens as an "anti-party party" that needed to be committed wholly to "fundamental opposition."

Fischer's early success as a Green took place in Hesse. Then, in 1983, the Greens made it into the Bundestag. When parliament convened in late March, the new Green members, together with myriad supporters, paraded to the Bundestag carrying plants, colorful signs, and planet-earth beach balls. The German political establishment would never be the same.

As a newly minted parliamentarian, Fischer quickly distinguished himself as one of the party's best speakers. He gained a national profile and became a favorite of the media thanks to his quick wit and persistent heckling of conservative opponents. As a party, the Greens were an acrimonious lot, and their bid for transparency—including televising all of their internal meetings—meant that the divisions were on full public display. As Hockenos points out, it took the Greens a full decade to overcome the most debilitating of their contradictions.

The Greens' shaky debut on the national political stage received a boost from the peace movement, which peaked during the fall of 1983 as millions of West Germans protested the planned deployment of intermediate nuclear forces. The Bundestag voted in favor of the deployment, with 286 members of the governing coalition parties (Christian Democrats and Free Democrats) voting in favor and 226 Social Democrats and Greens voting against it. The peace movement marked the first time that the West German public opposed its leadership in order to speak out against an American policy that directly affected the security of Germany.

At this point the Greens' rotation policy in the Bundestag forced Fischer off the national political stage and allowed him to reenter politics in Hesse. The Hessian elections in 1985 resulted in the first SPD-Green coalition and produced one ministerial position for the smaller coalition partner. Fischer became environment minister, "the first Green minister on the planet," according to Hockenos. Heads turned when Fischer arrived to take his oath in bright white Nike high

Joschka Fischer with Joseph Biden, 2001

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tops and jeans. Despite the best efforts of the Social Democrats to keep the new environment ministry weak, the Chernobyl disaster in 1986 turned Fischer into the man of the hour. The West German public wanted to hear from the first Green environment minister.

On the one hand, the Greens posed the first serious challenge to the Social Democrats from the left since the founding of West Germany. On the other, the SPD and its center-right counterpart, the Christian Democrats (CDU), expected the Greens to find their way back under the wing of the SPD and disappear within a couple of years. In fact, the Greens would prove themselves to be an enduring phenomenon.

While much of the success of the Greens resulted from their ability to divine the Zeitgeist, the party failed completely to grasp the implications of the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the inevitability of unification. In Hockenos's telling, "the Greens opposed unification long after it was a fait accompli." Fisher, for his part, argued in print one week after the wall fell that Germany's division was the price that Germany had to pay for Auschwitz, and continued to be a precondition for a Europe-wide peace, even with the Cold War over. In the immediate run-up to Germany's official reunification in October 1990, Fischer would write: "I accept Germany's unification because I have to accept it. I can't shake my distrust of this 'we are one nation' thing."

While Fischer may have come to terms with Germany's unification late and poorly, he led the metamorphosis of Green foreign policy during the 1990s. He wrote *The German Risk* in 1994, outlining a foreign policy agenda for a united Germany. Strikingly, he suggested that united Germany, like the old Federal Republic, needed to preserve its proper place among the Western allies, including its key relationship to the United States, and not occupy some middle zone between East and West. He underscored the need for Germany to retain "continuity" in its foreign policy. Many interpreted Fischer's words as proof that he coveted the foreign ministry if the 1998 elections resulted in the ouster of the CDU/FDP government.

An ongoing debate in the Green party had been whether Germany should use military force to stop the Serb onslaught against the Muslim civilian population in Bosnia. Fischer's initial position had been that there should be no German military presence in places that the Wehrmacht had occupied during World War II (which would include the Balkans). But his position would change fundamentally in 1995 following the massacre of 7,000 Bosnians in Srebrenica. In a 13-page open letter to his party, Fischer reversed his position and called on the Greens to wake up to the reality that international policy in Bosnia had failed. Nonetheless, in late 1995, 60 percent of Green party delegates voted against any participation of German soldiers in a NATO-led stabilization force in Bosnia. While pacifism remained a bedrock principle for most Greens, change was underway and Fischer was driving it.

Joschka Fischer likely never imagined that the two axioms that had guided his political activism and convictions—'never again war,' 'never again Auschwitz'—would ever conflict.

The election results in 1998 were exactly what the SPD and Greens had hoped for. The Social Democrats garnered 41 percent of the vote and the Greens, 6.7 percent, enough to form a governing coalition. That coalition was the first red-green government at the national level and marked the first time in postwar Germany that a change of government led to a complete break with all of the parties in the incumbent coalition. History was being made. Gerhard Schröder would become the Social Democratic chancellor and the Greens would claim three ministries: Jürgen Trittin became environment minister; Andrea Fischer, health minister, and—most eye-catching to all and alarming to some—Joschka Fischer became foreign minister and vice chancellor.

In an episode that would prove to be stranger than fiction, 12 days after the election, even before coalition negotiations had begun, Schröder and Fischer were asked to make a whirlwind trip to Washington to meet with Bill Clinton to discuss the Kosovo crisis. All agreed that, if necessary, Germany and its incoming red-green government would condone airstrikes against Yugoslavia (even without a United Nations mandate) but would not contribute any aircraft or military personnel until the new Bundestag could vote on it.

Schröder and Fischer left Washington relieved that Clinton had not pushed them to contribute directly to the military effort. But three days later Chancellor Helmut Kohl informed the two that Washington had changed its mind: President Clinton wanted Germany fully committed to the military operation. Schröder and Fischer consented and agreed to have Kohl reconvene the old Bundestag for a special session—a historically unprecedented, even legally dubious move—and 500 of 580 members approved Clinton's request, including the majority of the Greens.

As it turned out, no military action was needed at that point, as the Serbian leader Slobodan Milosevic backed down and agreed to a cease-fire and the deployment of monitors in Kosovo. But the incident, and the reaction of Schröder and Fischer, was telling and critically important in U.S.-German relations, and assured Germany's allies of continuity in foreign policy.

These events gave Fischer's words, when he assumed the mantle of foreign minister, particular resonance: "I'm not a Greens foreign minister," he said, "but the foreign minister of all Germans. There won't be a Green foreign policy."

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Kosovo never left the agenda and, despite energetic efforts (including by Fischer himself), the cease-fire broke down and peace talks failed. In 1999 NATO aircraft began bombing Serbia. In the first sortie, German pilots flew four Tornado jets, and as Hockenos explains: "Germany was in a shooting war for the first time in 54 years—without a U.N. mandate, against a sovereign state that hadn't attacked it or a NATO ally, in a region that the Nazis had once wreaked terror upon, and under the leadership of a red-green government." Who would have imagined that this milestone would become one of the most significant components of Fischer's legacy?

When NATO began its bombing campaign, the conventional wisdom was that NATO would quickly prevail. No one imagined that the campaign would drag on for 78 days. There was no official within the alliance who was more exposed than Fischer: He faced the all-too-real prospect that his pacifist party base would desert him, and the Greens called an extraordinary party conference for mid-May to vote on German participation in the Kosovo mission. On May 13, 800 delegates gathered in Bielefeld and, as Fischer sat on the stage with the rest of the party's national leadership, demonstrators burst into the hall and one protester hurled a balloon filled with red paint at him, exploding on his head. (The right side of Fischer's face and torso were covered in red, but he refused medical help at the time and it would turn out that he had suffered a broken eardrum.)

Hockenos tells this tale beautifully, capturing the drama of Fischer delivering the most critical speech of his life since 1976 when he had pleaded with the West German left to renounce violence. Twenty-three years later, in one of the more arresting ironies of Fischer's life, he was trying to convince the left why they had to support violence:

> I understand all too well your arguments and reservations. They're mine, too. I wage this debate with myself every day. But I nevertheless ask you to have the strength to accept responsibility, as difficult as that may be. What I ask as foreign minister is that you help steer this course. Please support me, strengthen me, don't weaken me.

The party reversed its former positions, with 444 voting in support of the leadership's resolution and 318 against. Fischer had been vindicated.

Joschka Fischer likely never imagined that the two axioms that had guided his political activism and convictions—"never again war," "never again Auschwitz"—would ever conflict. But in the case of Kosovo these two postwar imperatives could no longer coexist. For Fischer, the legacy of Auschwitz meant that the international community had to use the instruments of war to stop another genocide in Europe, and Germany's own history compelled it to engage militarily.

The red-green government's bid for reelection in 2002 was inextricably connected with the run-up to the Iraq war. The attacks of 9/11 had led Schröder to declare that "now is the time for solidarity with the United States. Germany has to stand shoulder to shoulder with the United States and show unlimited solidarity." That solidarity held in the case of the war in Afghanistan, but shattered as the Bush administration moved steadily forward with its plans to attack Iraq. Schröder, whose SPD was doing dismally in state elections (with the Greens faring no better), chose to make Germany's opposition to the war a major campaign issue. In Hanover he argued that "playing around with war and military intervention—this I warn against. With me, that's not going to happen." He would use this formulation across Germany for the duration of the campaign, and the SPD-Green coalition was returned to power. But it was a surge in Green votes that allowed the coalition to survive. Fischer had become the most popular politician in Germany.

Of course, no champagne corks were popping at the White House over this victory, and President Bush would not even place the perfunctory call to congratulate the reelected chancellor on his victory. Bush could never forgive Schröder for what he saw as a betrayal, even though the two overlapped in office until the fall of 2005.

A particularly striking public episode, illustrating the depth of the U.S.-German split over Iraq, involved Fischer. In February 2003, in the immediate run-up to the war, at the annual security conference in Munich, Fischer responded to Donald Rumsfeld's case for invasion by following his pointed rebuttal in German with English: "Sorry, I am not convinced," he said, slapping the podium for emphasis and continuing, his voice rising: "You have to make your case. Sorry, you haven't convinced me!"

As he explained in a press interview that same month, "I don't have any patience for anti-Americanism, but despite all differences in size and weight, alliances can't be reduced to follow-the-leader. Allies aren't satellites."

Joschka Fischer is a remarkable personality. The prejudice he felt growing up in a refugee family in class-conscious West Germany left him with a deep desire to be "number one," a drive that propelled him to repeatedly prove himself. He never finished high school, but sat in on classes at Stuttgart's technical university and later at Frankfurt's Goethe University. Fischer can quote *Das Kapital* and has the proletarian credentials to back up the ideology; but he always seems self-conscious about his lack of formal education. It is somehow fitting that, when he resigned his seat in the Bundestag in 2006, he accepted an adjunct lectureship at Princeton. His complicated relationship with the United States, and to institutions of higher learning, had come full circle.

Paul Hockenos captures the essence of Fischer's story in one sentence: Fischer made his way "not only from the outer fringes of the republic into its center, but also from the very bottom of the social ladder to the very top—a feat unthinkable in the highly stratified Germany of old." Fischer, he writes, was "the nation's prodigal son." Certainly his remarkable ability to reinvent himself—from high school dropout to '60s radical, from leading figure in the anti-party party to Germany's foreign minister—leaves you wondering what the next act will be. ♦

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Thinking on Film

The way the wind is blowing for newspaper movie critics. **BY JOHN PODHORETZ**

In the past three years, three dozen film critics have been told by the struggling newspapers and alternative weeklies for which they work that their interpretations of the latest Hollywood and foreign fare are no longer part of the business plan in a business that no longer has much of a plan except to hold off the Grim Reaper as long as possible—which, in the words of the deranged ex-CIA agent Vince Ricardo in *The In-Laws*, "could be about an hour."

Indeed, it is likely that by the time the year is over, only the top 10 or 15 papers in the country will have a movie critic on staff. The rest will rely on freelancers or wire service reviews. The death of the newspaper movie critic has been the occasion for much weeping, wailing, and gnashing of teeth among . . . newspaper movie critics. If you live in one of the cities in which the local critic is no more, you may not even have noticed the difference.

If you have worked for a newspaper in the past 20 years, and have had the fascinating misfortune of attending one of the innumerable focus groups convened to tell you what is right or wrong with your paper, you will have learned many awful things.

One is that many people are stupid. The other is that nobody pays attention to the things professional writers care the most about. They don't look at bylines; they don't know the difference between wire copy and staff-written material. They like (or used to like, before the Internet came along) sports scores and stats boxes, TV listings and stock quotes, and weather maps. They adore weather maps. They are keenly interested in the supermarket ads and the movie ads.

What do all these things have in common? They are not *written*.

There is a story told about a major American newspaper that was among the first to do a huge readership survey in the early 1980s. The survey cost several million dollars. And in those days, the editors expected to learn that their lead political columnist was the most popular in the paper, that people really followed the sports columnists, and that the area rose and fell with the opinions on the editorial page.

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To their absolute horror, what the editors discovered was this: No more than 5 percent of the readers looked at the editorials. The lead political columnist was one of the least-read. And the most popular item was "Walter Scott's Personality Parade," a column of questions and answers about celebrities which appeared not in the newspaper itself but in *Parade*, the independently published Sunday supplement.

And nobody, but nobody, knew the names of the critics. This was at a time when the paper in question had two movie critics, two theater critics, two television critics, two book critics, a dance critic, a rock critic, a classical music critic, and an architecture critic. It took the paper nearly three decades to get around to it, but the lead critics in all but one of these fields have taken buyouts and are not being replaced.

The question raised about the cashiering of criticism at the nation's newspapers is not: Whatever will happen to the people who are paid to watch movies for a living and write 300 words about each one? It is, rather, what harm is being done to the national cultural conversation (assuming there is such a thing) by the fact that there are fewer and fewer voices participating in it.

The first answer, of course, is that there aren't fewer voices, but many, many more. There are hundreds, if not thousands, of working critics on the Web in all fields. There are book bloggers and film bloggers and dance bloggers and music bloggers. The only difference between them and the professionals is that they don't get paid, except for a few dollars a week from Google ads.

Movie criticism has been a feature of American newspapers for a century, and sadly, one can count the standout critics throughout that time on maybe two hands. Many of these jobs were filled by reporters or editors who didn't get another plum assignment and were thrown a bone by a gruff but kindly managing editor. Nothing much good was going to come of that.

This deprofessionalization is probably the best thing that could have happened to the field. Film criticism requires nothing but an interesting sensibility. The more self-consciously educated one is in the field—by which I mean the more obscure the storehouse of cinematic knowledge a critic has—the less likely it is that one will have anything interesting to say to an ordinary person who isn't all that interested in the condition of Finnish cinema. Amateurism in the best sense will lead to some very interesting work by people whose primary motivation is simply to express themselves in relation to the work they're seeing—a purer critical impulse than the one that comes with collecting a paycheck along the way. ♦

John Podhoretz, editor of Commentary, *is* THE WEEKLY STANDARD*'s movie critic.*

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"Obama pressed to engage on gay issues."

—**New York Times,** *May 7, 2009*

Parody

OFFICE OF COMMUNICATIONS

May 20, 2009

President Barack Obama has announced that June will be officially designated Gay Awareness Month in the White House, an opportunity for reflection on the proud heritage of gay Americans throughout our nation's history, featuring the commemoration of important milestones in the lives of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered Americans.

"Our fellow LGBT citizens have traveled a long and difficult road," said President Obama, in a statement, "but never let it be said that the struggle for equality and dignity, in the bedroom as well as in the workplace—or in the bathhouse, or both—can ever truly be considered to be over."

Festivities will begin on Monday, June 22, with an inter-faith/intra-species prayer service to mark the 40th anniversary of the death of entertainer Judy Garland. Pastor Ted Haggard and the Rt. Rev. V. Gene Robinson, Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire, will jointly preside over the service, and there will be performances by singer k.d. lang and diver Greg Louganis in the White House pool, as well as a special "communion" ceremony featuring bread fresh from the oven and a bittersweet Merlot.

During the following week a series of panel discussions will take place in the newly redecorated Blue Room to mark the 50th anniversary of the publication of *A Separate Peace* by John Knowles. These discussions will begin with a selection of readings from the book by novelist Edmund White, followed by an interpretive dance, created by diet guru Richard Simmons, based on the death of Finny. Seminar details will be forthcoming.

The seminar series will culminate over the weekend with a gala midnight concert on June 28, headlined by rock 'n' roll legend Little Richard, on the 40th anniversary of the Stonewall Riot, the popular 1969 uprising in Greenwich Village that marked the beginning of the Gay Liberation Movement that has made America a fairer and

(*continued*)

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